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THE
CREW OF THE 'SAM WELLER.'

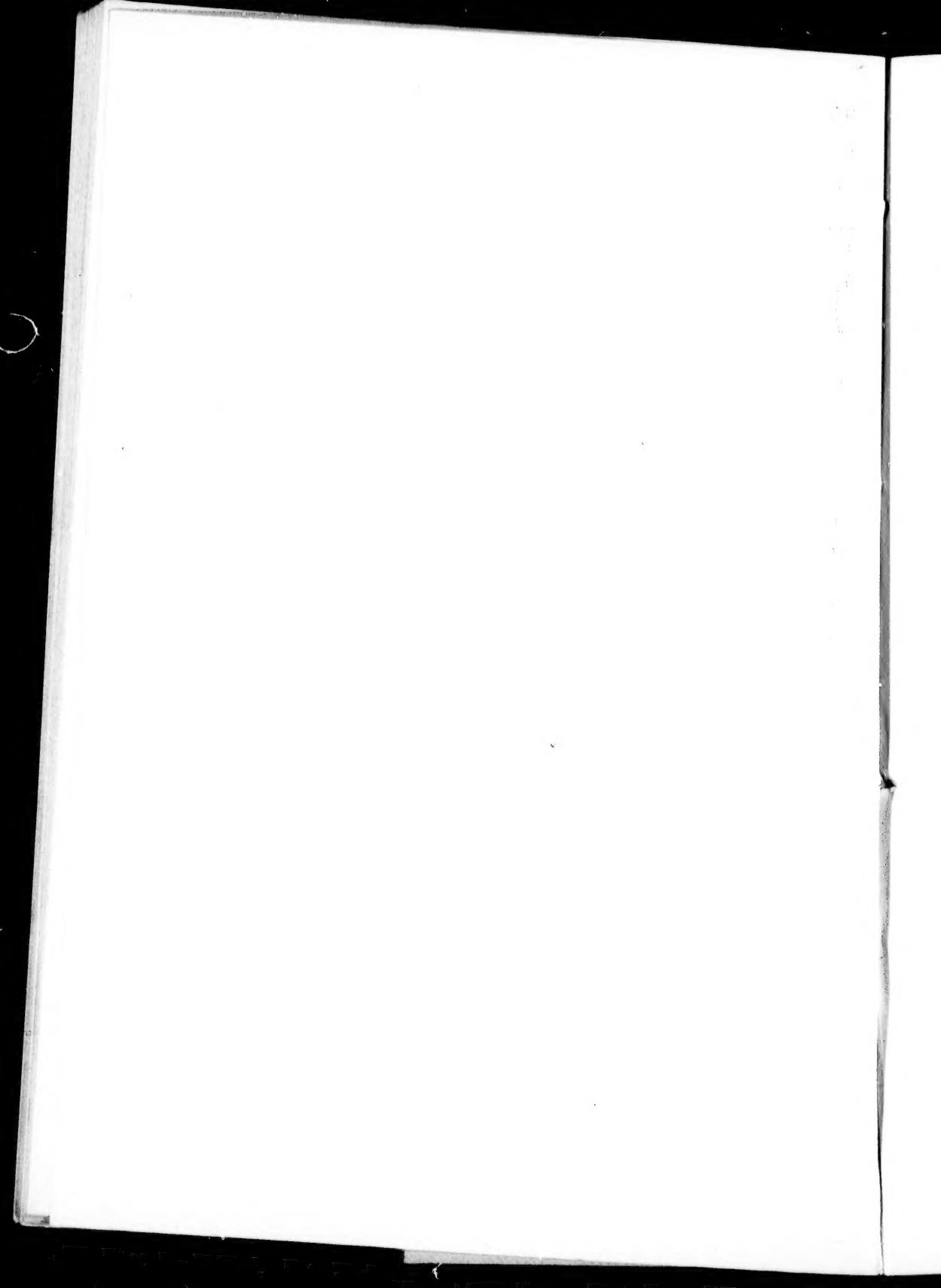
BY

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COMPLETE.

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THE CREW OF THE "SAM WELLER."

In days which are called old times, although half of the people who lived then still live, there were no railways west of the Alleghanies nor any telegraphs anywhere, yet there were everywhere mysterious channels through which passed from the East to the West nearly everything by which the heart of one man might gladden that of another. And so it came to pass that many years ago there was wafted from the farther shore of the Atlantic, across the mountains, along the lonesome rivers, through dense forests in which even wild beasts might lose themselves, and over road stretches of prairie in whose trackless wastes men were often lost, the English story which has caused more hearty merriment than all other humorous tales ever written. It passed unharmed by many a fever-haunt like unto its author's own "New Eden," then along the edge of a black swamp, up a doleful-looking little creek, across a bit of dry ground, up a little hill and into purer air, and finally into the hands and heart of old Wesley Berryman, owner of one of the stores in the village of Blackelsville. Old Wesley, sometimes called "Uncle," but frequently designated by appellations not so respectful, was a Methodist class-leader as well as a storekeeper; he was reputed a "close-fisted" man and the owner of the dismallest collection of religious books in that section of the country. Of late, however, men had seen him laughing a great deal as he read at his store door-step when no customer were by, and they feared—or hoped—that the old man was losing his mind. Finally, on a bright November morning, old Wesley walked, with a gait adapted about equally from the penitent and the sneak, down the main street and to the creek, carrying a paint-pot and brush; two hours later the town was shaken, almost as by a severe ague, by the information that old Wesley's new flat-boat had a name painted on it, and it wasn't done in tar, either, as was the usual way, but with good black paint and on a surface smoothed for the purpose.

"Must be after somebody that's just died, then," suggested old Mrs. Longhouse, who was the first recipient of the news from the fisherman who had brought it from the creek, "Somebody who's just died, and that the old man has come it over in a trade some way, mark my words. What did ye say the name wuz, George?"

"Sam Weller," replied the fisherman; "I wuz askin' the fellers 'round the saw-mill if they knewed any such person, but they didn't. I do 't remember the names about these parts."

"Nuther do I," said the old lady, "and I was born—well, 'twan't *last* year, anyhow," she continued diplomatically, after almost committing the most unwomanly indiscretion of revealing her age. "Mebbe he was some of the old man's wife's folks," said Mrs. Longhouse, gazing fix-

edly into the foliage of a great oak as if it were the Berryman genealogical tree; "they say *she* brought him his money, an' there wuz some trouble about gettin' it. Anyhow the old man ain't used up good paint *that* way unless there's somethin' on his mind—mark my words, George."

"Just what *I* say, Miss Longhouse," replied the fisherman, and the remaining villagers agreed with the couple.

As for the craft whose name had been the cause of so much curiosity, she was typical of the country in which she was built—broad, rough, unsightly, but extremely useful. She was simply an enormous oblong box, with no interior space but what was useful for stowage purposes. The bare ground constituted the "ways" upon which she was built, and the ceremony of launching was conducted solely by nature, for the November rains expanded the little creek until its waters reached the boat and lifted it. Nature also supplied its motive power, for it was expected to move only by floating with the currents of such streams as it drifted into. It had a long oar aft, and one on each side amidships, but these were merely to be used when it was necessary to change the boat's course—never to increase her speed. Her cabin was merely an unoccupied end of the boat, being separated from the stowage space only by a wall of corn in bags. The furniture, though not elegant, was sufficient; upon each side were two bunks, and against the wall of corn sacks was another, and these five beds accommodated the entire crew and its single officer. A plain wooden table stood in front of the officer's bunk, this latter being by day a seat, and against the broader wall of the boat reposed a brick fire-place and chimney. The walls were ornamented with culinary utensils, and about the floor, out of the ordinary centre, were ranged the principal portion of the commissary stores.

"I reckon old Uncle Berryman 'll be sendin' his boat off pretty soon," suggested one villager to another after they had exchanged greetings and disposed of the weather. "He's got that name on her, and he wouldn't have done that till the last minute, so's to save the interest on the cost of paint."

The speaker's supposition was correct, whether or not its basis were sound. The Sam Weller had been raised from the ground by the swelling of the creek, her moistened planking closed its seams, she was pumped dry, her cargo, consisting of barrels of pork and sacks of corn, was put on board, and quite a number of loafers had stood idly about for several days so as to be ready to enjoy to the full the excitement of seeing the Sam Weller drift down the creek, when Deacon Ezra Packstitt, who had several months before been engaged as captain, pilot, mate, and clerk, carried dismay and an anxious face into Uncle Berryman's store by stating that two of the crew had failed him at the last

instant. One of them had gone no one knew where, upon a final spree, in anticipation of several weeks of the correct habits which Deacon Packstitt always exacted from his crew, and the other had broken a leg while working in a 'clearing.'

"I had that drunken Sam Pyger on my mind, too," said the Deacon, mournfully; "I'd meant to git him under conviction, anyhow, on this trip, while he was away from his old friends, and maybe, the good Lord willin', git him converted before he got back home."

"An' I," said the owner of the boat, resting his elbows on his counter and staring vacantly at a shelf of patent medicines, "I'd got him to agree to take half his pay in store goods, so he'd have cost me about five dollars less than the rest of 'em. It's hard on both of us, Deacon, but the creek may fail—ain't rained much for a day or two—so I reckon we'll hev to leave our sorrows to the Lord, and look up a new man—two new men. Mebbe you can get some other feller that needs converting a bad as Sam Pyger did; you might tell him what the range-ment was with Sam, an' git him to take half his pay in goods."

The Deacon wrinkled his brows and pursed his lips rather impatiently, but Uncle Berryman was his employer, there were no other flatboats building on the creek that season, and there were other pilots to be had, so the Deacon speedily recovered his business temper, and remarked:—

"Oh, yes; there's plenty that need it as bad, but there ain't as likely soi in 'em to work on. They ain't got the headpiece to understand the doctrines. How much shall I offer to pay?"

"On, Deacon," said the storekeeper, "there you go again on the wrong track. You're always expecting people to git religion through their heads. I got mine though my heart, in the twinklin' of an eye, glory to God! an' so can anybody else of they believe. I don't think I'd offer more'n twenty-five dollars. I know thirty's the regular price, but flatboats are skeere this winter, an' there must be lots of fellows waitin' to go to Orleans."

"There's plenty that want to go," replied the Deacon, "but they ain't them that I'd take. Now there's Emory Rickins' boy—he's old enough an' strong enough, but let him once get to New Orleans, an' he'd go to the devil faster'n he ever rode a hoss in a scrub race. I heerd him talkin' about wantin' to go—it must have been the beginnin' of the season—an' he said he'd be glad to go for nothin', just to see Orleans."

"Why, git him, then!" exclaimed the storekeeper, straightening himself at once. "I never had such a chance but once in my life before—I'd be just that much ahead."

The Deacon straightened too. "I can't do it, Mr. Berryman. I don't mean to have the loss o' that boy's soul laid on me."

The storekeeper turned toward a shelf of Bibles, and then turned rapidly back again. "Deacon Packstitt," said he, "ain't your resk, at all. Whether a man standeth or falleth, he doeth it unto himself. That's good Scripture doctrine, I b'leieve? If a man falls, it's his own sin; it ain't goin' to be laid onto any flatboat pilot no, nor any flatboat owner, neither."

"Yes, that's good doctrine," admitted the Deacon after a moment of hesitation, "but if a man falls because somebody else puts a stumblin' block in his way, I reckon it isn't the fault of the man that falls, particularly if the stumblin' block that's stuck ou' is as big as the hull city of New Orleans. Besides," concluded the Deacon, "nobody ever could keep that boy from gittin' drunk just when he's a mind to, an'

if he happened to git too much aboard when 'twas his turn on deck, and he let her run her head on an island, there'd be the whole cargo spiled if the river should fall. You know I always was down on takin' drinkin' men onto crews—ain't ever safe."

"That's so, Deacon," said the storekeeper, who had slowly resumed his listless position, "you always was safe—as you ort to be. But I kind o' think you dodged the subject of who'd be to blame if the boy went to the bad. I'll have that out with you, sometime; I've got the apostle Paul on my side, so I'm sure to beat you. But who can we get? Why—I declare!—how could I have forgot! There's old Lugwine, down in the Bottoms; he was beggin' me to let him go, but 'twas after the hands war all engag-ed; he said he wanted to go so's to cut an bring back a hundred or two fish-poles,* that he thought he could get a quarter apiece for. He ought to be willin' to take twenty-five, yes, twenty dollars, and even fifteen, for the chanc'e of makin' money on a lot of fish-poles. An' he's never be n' gathered into the ark of safety, nor he. There's your chance, Deacon."

"Well, yes," said the Deacon. "He isn't much of a man, but he'll do on a pinch. I don't know about convertin' them Bottom chaps, though; their dogs has got more sense, an' just about as much religi'on."

"You wouldn't talk so dismal about 'em if you was a Methodist instead of a Presbyterian, Deacon," said the storekeeper with animation. "The grace of God can find its way into the meanest heart, bless the Lord. Once I didn't think any more about religion than a Bottom feller, an' now look at me."

It was perhaps unconsciously that the storekeeper dropped his eyes as he concluded this speech, so that when the Deacon complied with his employer's request, the face of the latter was so nearly invisible that the Deacon could see little but a dull scalp insufficiently covered with dingy gray hair. It was better that it should be so, however, for the Deacon's peculiar gaze might not have fully pleased his emp'yer. Suddenly the storekeeper raised his head and remarked:

"Well, old Lugwine's one, anyhow; it would be burying my Lord's talent instead of putting it to usry, if I lost him when there's a chance of gettin' him so cheap. You'd better go see him right off, while I look up somebody else; if I can find somebody with a soul to be saved, I'll do it, even though you an' me don't agree on how it ort to be done."

The Bottom, in which Deacon Packstitt was to find old Lugwine, had the reputation of being a hard place. Everything about it was hard, except the soil; this, as if to counterbalance the general hardness of the Bottom, was soft and yielding. Grass never grew under the trees in the Bottom, and prostrate trunks turned black and exuded ooze. The houses in the Bottom were small, and of logs; each of them consisted of a single room, the door of which was frequently the only window, and was occasionally the chimney also. Furniture, except frying-pan, axe and gun, was almost unknown in the Bottom.

The inhabitants of the Bottom were in one sense aristocrats—they despised labour, and they persistently abstained from doing any. They would sit upon door-steps or the bank of the creek, but never as labourers in the market place. A Bottomite would occasionally fish, or chase a deer, or shoot a wild turkey, or cut down a hollow tree with the hope of finding

* American bamboo, which grows very large in the swamps of the Lower Mississippi.

honey therein, but all such efforts were classified as sports. In dress, also, the inhabitants of the Bottom were aristocrats in which they were guilty of no servile imitation of each other. Each wore garments peculiar to himself, and which seldom or never gave place to those prescribed by tyrannical fashion. In matters of education, too, they were aristocratic; their pride in the ignorance of their children was, if not so po-tically expressed as that of the aged Douglas, at least asserted by deeds the import of which could not be mistaken. While the county authorities were building a school-house among them, the Bottomites declined even to sit upon its timbers, and when the building was completed, they quietly burned it to the ground. They were not annoyed to learn that the school-house had been paid for by taxation in the county, for no Bottomite was ever known to pay taxes.

In religion, every man in the Bottom was a priest unto himself. The women occasionally exhibited sentimental weakness on the subject of preaching, and the men allowed them to do so—that was all. Old Elder Hobbedowker rode over to the Bottom one Sunday to smite the inhabitants with the sword of the Spirit, and walked home after service, his horse having disappeared, never to return. Then young English, a meek-eyed Episcopalian, read the beautiful service of his Church in the Bottom, with no response except from a somnolent male or two. Brother Rungtite, the circuit rider, went to them as an ambassador bearing a message from his great King, but when he took from his pocket some neatly folded pieces of paper on which he had made notes from which to speak, the inhabitants took him for a deputy sheriff in disguise, and those who did not precipitately retire arose and cast him from their midst.

Consistent as the inhabitants of the Bottom strove to be, they were human, and they departed so far from their principles as to plant corn. For this offence against their unwritten creed they were not to be condemned severely, for the influence upon their lives of the beautiful cereal was almost as great as that of fate itself. Unlike other sorts of labour, the planting of corn was almost pleasurable. The ground was first prepared by plough, and the horse (borrowed) who drew this implement always drew also the greater portion of the weight of the lord of the manor, as he followed in the furrow. The planting of the corn was done by the assistance of the neighbours, and offered nearly as many opportunities for conversation and conviviality as did perfect leisure. As the corn grew and waxed tall, the field formed for the inebriate Bottomite a perfect refuge from the reproachful eyes of his wife, or from the minions of the law who had frequent occasion to visit the Bottom; for a walk of a few steps into its leafy coverings would secrete a man as securely as a wearisome tramp into the forest. Besides, the cultivation of corn was in some sense a matter of honour to the inhabitant of the Bottom: his highest ambitions, his most earnest exertions, his tenderest flights of fancy, his deeds of greatest daring, were all induced by whiskey; this stimulant was made from corn, and if men were to plant, where was the mainspring of life to come from?

His freedom from the thralls of education being as perfect as it was, it is not wonderful that the Bottomite never consulted an almanac; to this fact may be attributed his peculiar method of dividing the year into seasons. His seasons were three: the first, which began in May and was quite short, was the time to plant corn; the remainder of the year was divided into time to drink whiskey and time to send for

the doctor. The duration and limits of the first season might be closely defined, but the others lapsed and inter-communicated as lovingly as the isothermal lines along the line of the Northern Pacific railway.

The male inhabitants of the Bottom had one human weakness to an unusual degree—they worshipped their women. Their adoration was in many respects like that with which most worshippers regard Deity; it was always stupid and sometimes vulgar; it was full of negatives; it did not imply that the worshipper would put himself out to spare pain for the worshipped, but, on the other hand, it would never wilfully inflict pain. Obedience was as frequently and willingly rendered by the husband to the wife as according to the most irksome of conventional marriage vows. The women at the Bottom were characterized by many attributes of aristocracy; they were small, slight, colourless, and generally displayed the mud-coloured hair, vacant eye, low forehead and retreating chin so frequently noticed in the descendants of families which inherited wealth. But the expression of lassitude peculiar to most aristocrats had in the women of the Bottom given place to a look which seemed to indicate a longing for heaven yet a fear to leave earth, and it was with this expression that Mrs. Lugwine greeted Deacon Packitt when the old man, who, a magistrate as well as a deacon, enquired for her husband.

"I ain't seed him lately," said Mrs. Lugwine; "he 'lowed this mornin' that mebbe he might go to town a bit."

The Deacon scraped with his heel the dirt where the door-sill would have been had the house been almost anywhere else, and then he looked enquiringly and somewhat doubtfully toward the town.

"Nobody hain't sick, is there?" asked Mrs. Lugwine, with hypocritical solicitude and with a trembling heart.

"Oh, no," replied the Deacon; "I was only thinkin' that mebbe Cain, your husband, might like to go to Orleans with me on Berryman's flatboat."

"My!" exclaimed Mrs. Lugwine, first looking greatly relieved, and then more anxious than ever: "Orleans is a good ways off—way below Cairo."

"I reckon it is," remarked the Deacon, applying a vigorous grind or two to his mouthful of tobacco—"about twelve hundred miles below."

"Sakes!" exclaimed Mrs. Lugwine; "that's a powerful ways!" The announcement of the distance seemed to work upon her mind so forcibly as to occasion unusual agitation, for the old lady abruptly and hastily filled and lighted a clay pipe. "Are you sure you can bring him back safe?"

The Deacon looked quickly into the eyes before him, but dim and old as they were there was something in them which he could not gaze upon longer than an instant; then he looked into the barren hut, and around its dismal surroundings, and said softly, to himself,

"If I was sure I couldn't, what a God's blessing! I'd be to you an' your young ones!" Then he said aloud,

"Oh, certainly; make him to come back with me, and I'll engage to bring him right side up."

"Well," said the old lady, with an agitated puff or two at her pipe, "I dunno. It bears to be a great risk. I wish Cain was here himself. Praps he is somewhere around—mebbe he didn't go to town after all. I'll see if I can find him. Sit down, Deacon—if ye sit on that log thar, ye ken rest yer back agin t' e side of the house."

Mrs. Lugwine moved toward the little patch called by courtesy a "field" of corn, and soon returned, followed by her lord and master, who, under the influence of an opportunity to do something he wanted to, was already looking considerably more manly than usual. The change in his appearance so startled the Deacon that he determined not to beat him down in price at all, so he simply announced that he would like him for one of the crew of Berryman's flatboat, at the usual price, payable in goods.

"I'll do it," said Mr. Lugwine promptly, "except I want five dollars of the pay in cash instead of goods. It'll cost me two dollars to come back, deck passage, on a steamboat, an' a dollar more to bring my fishpoles; a dollar for what I'll eat on the way, and then," said Mr. Lugwine, remembering his darling weakness, "I may get sick on the way, an' need some medicine."

"Come back with me," said the Deacon brusquely,—a most savagely, "an' I'll doctor you free of charge."

"It's a game, then," said Lugwine. "Shake hands onto it."

The Deacon took the outstretched hand rather gingerly; he had dug potatoes, the Deacon had, and without gloves, but there is generally but one kind of soil adhering to a potato, and it seems to belong there by divine right. Suddenly, however, this binding ceremony was broken by Mrs. Lugwine, who threw herself upon her husband's breast and exclaimed :

"Cain, ye hain't never been away from me that long before."

The Bottomite looked sheepishly at the Deacon, and then, as if somewhat surprised, at his wife.

"Why, that's so, Almyry, hain't it? I'll be gol darned ef it hain't!"

"Well," said the Deacon, "we want to get off to-morrer mornin', jest at daylight, so's to get out of the Ohio an' into the Mississippi before dark."

This announcement caused Mrs. Lugwine again to resort to the fragments of her husband's shirt front, from which she had temporarily retired, and to throw her arms across her husband's shoulders, beholding which indications of feeling the Deacon precipitately retreated. When he rejoined his employer he found that gentleman despondent.

"Pears like everything was aginst me," sighed Uncle Berryman. "Ev'rybody I've spoke to is just doin' somethin' or goin' to do somethin'. Didn't it never seem to you, Deacon, as if the Lord sometimes withdrew his protective arm from us, jest perhaps to try our faith?"

"Like enough," conceded the Deacon, who had long had his doubts as to whether his employer's interests were really committed to the care of the Lord or the adversary, but who did not care to argue a theological point when there was no time to be lost in reaching the Mississippi river. "But taint wise for us to stop tryin' at such times. Wonder who that strange feller is across the street?—he don't look as if he had anything to do, an' yet he don't look like a low'r."

The question was speedily answered by the stranger himself, for he crossed the street as if moved by a sudden impulse, walked into the store and said :

Mr. Berryman and Captain Packstitt, I believe?"

"Yours truly, sir," replied the Deacon.

"Ah, thank you," said the stranger; "my name is Brown—Walter Brown. I understand you want a hand for your flatboat. I've never been on a flatboat, but I've sailed a schooner in

a hard gale of wind. If you've no objection, I'd like to form one of the crew. The pay is no object. I want to go only for the sake of a new experience."

To have a man offer to work for nothing was a new experience to the storekeeper, but his tendency to find fault with an applicant for work had to be appeased in some way, so he said :

"I'm afearde you ain't strong enough."

The stranger snapped his eyes at the old man—handsome, but rest less and furtive eyes they were; suddenly he placed two bags of shot, weighing twenty-five pounds each, on his hand, and held them at arm's length, saying :

"Can you do that—either of you?"

"No," said the storekeeper hurriedly, "and I don't want to. Put 'em down quick, or mebbe you'll drop 'em an spill the shot—you can't ever get shot out of the cracks in a floor. I reckon you're strong enough, but your hands look pretty soft—the skin'll come off of 'em first time you he'n use the sweeps" (oars).

The stranger looked contemptuously at his small white hands, and briefly ejaculated. "Let it."

Both natives gazed so hungrily at the young man that they momen'arily forgot their business; strangers were not numerous or frequent at Brackelsville, and shapely, handsome, neatly dressed men were never seen there unless they happened to stray from elsewhere. The staring continued, and so did the silence, until the young man started, turned, and moved toward the door, saying: "I beg your pardon—I did not intend to impose myself upon you."

The storekeeper recovered himself hastily from the extreme depths of contemplation, and exclaimed :

"Here—stop a bit, stranger—Mr. Brown, I mean—don't be in a hurry. I don't see why you won't do; how is it, Deacon?"

"I'm satisfied," briefly answered the master of the craft.

"Then it's a bargain," said the storekeeper, "and—sho! why we hain't made a bargain at all."

"I leave that entirely to you, gentlemen," said the stranger.

"Well," said the storekeeper, lapsing into conserv'ative tones, "thirty dollars is the usual price, but there ain't many boats goin' this year, an' I s'pose there's plenty of fellows hang'n around that I could get for twenty, but ——"

"Make it twenty, then," said the stranger.

"When do you sail?"

"At daylight to-morrow," replied the Deacon.

"I'll be there," said the stranger with a bow: "Good day, gentlemen."

The two old men gazed on the retreating figure until it disappeared from view—then they gazed blankly upon each other. The proprietor was the first to break the silence,

"I b'lieve he'd have gone for fifteen," said he.

"I believe he needs convertin'," said the Deacon.

"Oh, well," said the storekeeper, somewhat vexed, "tha's no reason why I should lose five dollars that I might have saved."

The night wore on, as nights will, even in lands where the inhabitants are too feeble of body and soul to long for the morrow; the morning came as successfully as it could, considering the heaviness of the fog-blanket from under which he had to creep. Then came Rigley Soole, who had stayed awake all night that he might be sure to be up in time in the morning, and who consequently brought a heavy case with his portable effects. A few moments later came Deacon Packstitt with a well-stuffed

carpet-bag and his navigator's instruments,—to wit, a tin horn with which to warn approaching boats. Then appeared Job Tanker, who had been flatboating before, and greeted the Sam Weller with as hearty a smile as a sailor long land-locked bestows upon the ocean. Uncle Berryman then jogged in his waggon down the road from town, and brought the final invoice of commissary stores, which consisted of a coop of chickens. In the waggon with him was also the newest and least known member of the crew, and at the same time there dropped down the creek in a canoe, old Lugwine and his wife.

"Who's that feller there with good clothes on, Cain?" asked Mrs. Lugwine as her eye rested on Brown.

Old Lugwine gladly rested an instant in the midst of the operation of tying his canoe, looked over the little party and answered, "Dunno; never seed him before."

"He looks green," remarked Mrs. Lugwine.

"Well," replied her husband, completing at last the knot in his canoe line, "some folks does, Almiry."

"Not that way, though," said Mrs. Lugwine, picking up the game bag in which her husband's single extra shirt was packed, and leading the way to the flatboat. "His eyes are looking ev'ry way to once."

"Had snakes in his boots," suggested Mr. Lugwine.

"No, taint that kind of a look, either," continued Mrs. Lugwine.

"Then I don't know nothin' about it," said Mr. Lugwine promptly and honestly, from the depths of his experience. By this time he had joined the remainder of the crew, his wife drooping inconspicuously to the rear. Old Lugwine the Botomite was generally of a retiring disposition, but Lugwine the prosp'ctive boatman and traveller was quite a different person. He shook hands all round and looked each man steadily in the eye, until he came to Brown, upon a single glance from whose eyes he instantly dropped his own eyes and his half raised hand also. To hide his agitation he addressed Soole :

"What yer goin' to fetch back?"

"Coffee," said Soole. "It's five pounds for a dollar h're, an' the Orleans paper says it's only half that much by the bag. That's the way us poor men that works gits cheated. (Mr. Soole neglected to state, perhaps for fear of irrelevancy, that all the coffee he had drank within a year remained unpaid for at the store of a rival of Uncle Berryman.) I'll sell most of it, lower than the s'orekeepers do, make somethin' on it, an' have my own for nothin'."

"Well, I'm fetchin' fish-poles," said Mr. Lugwine. "Bout three months ago I caught a big cat-fish, an' he broke my pole, an' I haint had none since but big sticks I cut in the woods. What you fetchin', Tanker?"

"Sugar," was the reply. "A feller can always get rid of *that*, an' get his money back in a hurry. Folks'll have sweet things if they don't have nothin' else."

"Sugar's mighty useful," remarked Mr. Lugwine, pursing his lips, and thrusting his hands into his pockets, "specially when there's somethin' to drink that yer want to mix it into."

"Might as well be a-gittin', I s'pose," remarked the Deacon, deferentially looking around. Old Lugwine moved toward his wife as the others walked up the gang-plank, and Mrs. Lugwin remarked, "Cain, that strange fell'r is the queerest I ever see."

"Thunder an' tar-buckets, Almiry!" exclaimed Mr. Lugwine rather pettishly. "I never see 'em so wrapped up in another man before."

"Cain, I ain't," replied Mrs. Lugwine, re-

proachfully, "only I can't help a seein' what's right before my eyes. I wish you'd watch him, Cainey, old man."

"Why, do you think he'd steal?" asked Mr. Lugwine in alarm. Then the extreme sarcasm of theft being committed upon his own effects struck Mr. Lugwine so forcibly, that he blushed and explained, "Steal fish-poles, I mean."

"No, I don't mean that," said Mrs. Lugwine, "but there's somethin' on his mind, an' taint good trouble nuther, an' yit he don't look as if he'd hurt anybody. I wish you'd keep your eye on him, Cainey, old man."

"Last man onties the ropes," remarked Deacon Packstitt from the deck of the boat. Old Lugwine looked around in alarm, and exclaimed, "I reckon I'd better be leavin', Almiry; hez got a heap of comfort in 'em, old gai-hey!"

Mrs. Lugwine embraced and kissed her husband—she had not done so before since the last time he was taken to jail for assault and battery while drunk. Old Lugwine looked despairingly at the two heavy cables which he would have to loosen, and at length kissed his wife, released himself, and moved toward the stump about which one of the cables was wound. His wife followed him.

"Cain," said she, "don't git mad, but—watch that feller a little; he's on my mind."

"The devil he is!" responded Mr. Lugwine. "Ontie 'tother line now," shouted Deacon Packstitt, "an' then hurry for the plank fore the boat drifts."

Mr. Lugwine obeyed orders, and actually ran to get aboard; the boat leisurely started, the plank was hauled in, the storekeeper started from town, Job Tanker's small boy stared vacantly at the retreating boat, and presented to his father a picture of which a red nose and a set of chattering teeth were the principal features. Mrs. Lugwine waved her apron at her husband until the boat disappeared behind a bend; then she applied it to her eyes, and she and the shivering red-nosed boy took their separate ways for home."

II.

Mrs. Lugwine was not the only person in the world who desired to know more about Walter Brown, yet those who seemed most interested in him were apparently well informed about the young man, as may be inferred from the following extract from the advertising columns of a prominent Eastern journal of the day :

"WANTED!"

The defaulting receiving teller of the Domesic Bank, of New York. He is thirty-two years of age, five feet and even inches in height, fit complexion, with a considerable colour, reddish yellow hair and whiskers, dark blue eyes, manly refined and pleasant, yet brisk and decided. The initials R.D. are tattooed upon his left arm, his name being Richard Dorell; it is probable that the name or initials may be found upon some of his clothing. One thousand dollars will be paid by the bank for such information as may lead to the apprehension of the criminal."

Mr. Lugwine's opinion of literature being what it was, it is not surprising that the journal containing the advertisement quoted had not shed its informing influence in the Lugwine mansion; even had the paper itself reached the Bottom, the fate of the fugitive would have remained undecided by anything that Mrs. Lugwine might have done, for the good lady was unable to read, and none of her neighbours

could have done anything toward making amends for her deficiency.

As for the defaulting teller, he had the advertisement to thank for the only moments of jollity he had enjoyed since his flight from the bank. Secure in the disguise of a clean-shaven face, and an assumed name, he had in the reading-room of a Western hotel heard the advertisement read and discussed by a couple of business men, and not even the uncontrollable shudder which followed his hearing of the word "criminal" was able to prevent the satisfaction with which he heard the couple, after relieving their minds freely on the subject of dishonesty in Bank officials, pass naturally and with their entire hearts to the concocting of an enterprise which was morally a hundred times worse than robbing a bank, but against which neither law nor business sentiment would be likely to raise a dissenting hand. His time being all his own, he perused certain portions of newspapers very industriously, and by applying a certain line of logic to what he found there, he gradually succeeded in assuring himself that he was no worse than many business men for whose apprehension no rewards were offered. His conclusion was perfectly correct, in point of fact; and his logic being, like that of most other men, exercised only in certain special pleas for himself, he grew elated at his comparative respectability, instead of being cast down at the comparative rascality of such of the business world as he compared himself with. The effect upon himself of these conclusions seemed to him to be altogether happy, for it enabled him to hold his head higher and breathe freer than he had done in late days, though whether those who loved him best would have been satisfied with the peculiar changes which his countenance underwent during its progress from the shame-faced to the erect, is a question to which the veracious historian cannot respond in the affirmative. It occasionally seemed possible that Walter Brown himself was not fully satisfied with the change. A man cannot always be in the receptive mood, or the observing mood; nature has ordained a sort of mental clearing-house in the heart of every man, and whether its operations be regular or whether they be fitful, it attends to all necessary work. And so it was that Walter Brown, in spite of every possible attempt to kill time, frequently found himself consulting a mirror, with results that never tended toward hilarity. He had always been very well satisfied with his clear bright blue eyes, but now he studied them with a countenance earnest almost to anxiousness. There were spots and stripes in their pupils;—were they there before—before he—before he committed his irregularities, or were they not? A fine, an almost invisible line or two below them and at their outer angles—were those there in other days? For years his mouth had been hidden by a moustache; now that it was bare he wondered if the sides of his lower lip had been so prominent in other days as they now were—so obstinate in their determination that they would not submit to any endeavour to draw them in?

On the Sam Weller he had more time for reflection than ever, for the men who composed the crew were not engaging subjects for study, and Deacon Packstitt's Bible, the only printed matter which was publicly exposed, seemed to lack attractiveness. Upon the deck of the boat were stacked some barrels of pork which the overloaded hold could not accommodate, and in front of these, invisible to everyone but the helmsman, and displaying to him only the top of a felt hat, he used to sit for meditation and self-examination. His mates preferred the

cabin, and he heartily rejoiced thereat; he trusted they might continue to do so, and leave him to the unchanging landscape, and his own equally unchanging thoughts. But on the second day out, when the boat reached the Mississippi and deep water, and Deacon Packstitt's duties as pilot were intermittent and light, compared with what they had been on the Ohio, the Deacon gladly turned from his duty to his employer to that toward his Maker, and started in quest of his stranger-hand. He found him in front of the barrels, with a small pocket-mirror in his hand. The Deacon considerably looked the other way for a moment, and when again he turned his head the mirror was invisible.

"Nice mornin', ain't it?" remarked the Deacon.

"Very—very," replied Brown, getting briskly upon his feet, and remarking to himself, "Hatchet-faced old bore!"

"It'll get nicer ev'ry day, too, the farther South we get," continued the Deacon. "Clouds ain't so plenty down South as they be up here."

"All the pleasanter for the Southerners, I should say," returned the strange hand.

"Well, yes," said the captain, meditatively, and engaging with a shred of bark on a barrel-hoop; "that is, it would be, if they 'preciated it, but they don't 'pear to. Just like the rest of us, though, 'bout other things."

"The old fool has *some* sense," remarked Brown to himself. The captain drew his knife from his pocket, carved a letter X or two on the head of a barrel, and continued, disjointing his sentences whenever the exigencies of the carving required, for a moment, the entire attention of the artist.

"I tell our folks — in meetin' — that instead of grumblin' about what they hain't got, they'd — a mighty sight better be a-thankin' God for — pshaw!" interrupted the captain savagely, for the point of his blade broke and flew away and over the side. The captain scanned the water carefully for a moment, as if expecting to see the blade rise penitently to the surface and ask to be restored again to confidence and duty. The unreasonableness of such a hope soon became apparent, and the Deacon concluded his sentence—

"Better be a-thankin' God for what they've got—youth, an' health, an' time to repent, for instance."

"Very true! very true!" assented Brown. "That blade isn't all gone, is it? There's a stone in the cabin, you know, and you can grind a fair point upon it again," continued Brown, with visible eagerness.

"Shouldn't wonder," said the Deacon, pocketing the knife, but failing to act upon the hint. "I'll turn the stone for you myself, if you like," said Brown, after noting the failure of his suggestion: "that is, I'll do it after I write a letter which I want to have ready to mail at the first possible opportunity." And Brown started after his writing materials, leaving the Deacon in possession of a field without a victory. The Deacon looked after the retreating figure as it went down the cabin ladder, and then he mused aloud:—

"Wonder if he suspected? He can't always dodge me, though; there'll be rainy days an' night when he'll have to sit below, and listen, at least. I *would* like to hear him talk, though: he's got headpiece, that fellow has, and it's out of its place, too. Like enough, religion's the very last thing he cares to hear about, but that's the very reason he *should* hear about it."

The remaining members of the crew paid scarcely any attention to Brown and the young man became at once as displeased by their con-

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duct as he was by that of the Deacon. At home everybody noticed him, so to submit to neglect from boors was no easy task. Had they exhibited ordinary curiosity about him, Brown would have been satisfied, for he did not crave conversation with either Rigley Soole, or Job Tanker, or old Lugwine. But when Brown caught the glances of these gentlemen, he generally found them filled with distrust, and this enraged and alarmed him. Had he known the real cause of their feeling, his mind would have been at ease, for his neatly-fitting clothing, his bright eye, his clean-shaven and frequently washed face, and his agility of motion, showed him to be of mould unlike that of his companions, and whatever was unlike them was unknown to them, and therefore, according to one of humanity's most inflexible rules distrusted by them.

Brown speedily determined to avenge himself upon his messmates, or rather upon Soole and Tanker ; for Lugwine did not notice him at all except with a vacant stare which might mean anything or nothing. And the young man's method of avenging himself was that one which ladies are supposed to monopolize under similar circumstances ; he devoted himself to that member of the party who was least interesting and who cared least for him—to Lugwine. The task was no easy one, for Brown could not converse intelligently of any of the difficulties which had taken place in the Bo tom, nor of the sprees which at the same place had become historic, nor could he curse the Brackelley storekeepers with that fluency which Mr. Lugwine's experiences had seemed to justify and demand. But he cou d offer an occasional pipe of tobacco, and this was a courtesy which Mr. Lugwine always accepted at its full value, and the cumulative effect of several attentions of this sort was to move Lugwine to stand one day on the deck near Brown—instead of selecting some position where he might have something to lean against, as was his usual wont—and to confide to the young man a condensed and somewhat part zan historical sketch cf society at the Bottom, from its beginnings down to the time of this relation. Not Brown, instead of being disg sted, was amused and supplied with considerable food for thought and for subsequent congratulation. Like many another man whose character or inclinations have fallen below the standard which has been established for him by ancestry or society, Walter Brown had been speculating with much industry thou h little ease upon the possibility of sacrificing his character so that he might preserve his self-respect. He had recalled to the uttermost, the characters whose acquaintance he had made at college, through the aid of Homer, Virgil, Juvenal and other classical writers ; these respected themselves, and won, sometime merited, the regard of later generations ; yet they committed actions which the world of to day would not excuse. Might he not become a iagan himself, and live with a happiness which now was impossible to him ? But his mental experiments in this direction had not been at all successful. Defaulter though he was, fugitive from justice, and ostracised by society, he nevertheless encountered, at every point where he attempted an assault upon his old self, a quantity and quality of moral sense from which he could not divest himself. He had cursed its existence, but it remained unshaken by his anger. It was not, as he at first fondly imagined, a set of mental abstractions which he had assumed and put on, like his theory of politics or his las' suit of clothes ; it was a very element of his life, obtained by inheritance, and though susceptible

to abuse, it was susceptible to all attempts against its existence.

In Lugwine, however, Brown found hope. Here was a Pagan, absolutely and without modification, yet he was a man of the present generation and the neighbour and acquaintance of materialists of the nineteenth century. Right and wrong apparently were meaningless terms to him, except when translated by his own selfishness. He spoke as coolly of offences against moral and social laws as if they were not offences at all; and although those he alluded to were seldom of any magnitude, the thoroughness of his approval of them clearly indicated that virtue as a motive of conduct could never find favour in his eyes. And yet, he did not seem to be vicious; he wished harm only to his enemies, and seemed to be willing that the rest of the world should be as comfortable as he himself desired to be. He was not a model for the young defaulter who had been reared on a social plane infinitely removed from that of the Bottom, but he was that which to the enquiring mind is sometimes dearer than a model; he was an indication. It is often inconvenient to follow a model, but around an indication the most wayward and erratic mind may play at will. Where would a large class of our scientists be, had Mr. Darwin pronounced the ape a model instead of a mere indication, a suggestion?

So fascinating and consoling were the thoughts created by the contemplation of Mr. Lugwine, that Walter Brown soon found himself an earnest student of this representative Bottomite. Mr. Lugwine's conversational powers were few, and such as he possessed were safe from annoyance by their owner's languid will. His facial organs, however, not being subject unto will, expressed a great deal after the tongue had ceased to speak, and Brown therefore studied the old man's face with an earnestness and persistency which might have frightened Lugwine had his almost phenomenal indifference ever allowed him to realize what an object of interest he had become. Whether, could he have been for an instant endowed with his companion's acute powers of perception, and employed them upon his companion's countenance, he would not have been more than frightened, does not clearly appear.

Meanwhile the invisible powers were preparing an answer to the pious pilot's prayer for bad weather. The Deacon was roused one morning by information that the mist was so thick that the steersman could not tell whether he was in the channel or in shore. The Deacon came on deck once, listened upon either quarter for sounds which should indicate how far distant either bank of the stream might be, threw the lead repeatedly, and did all that careful flatboat pilot could have done, and yet, he seemed remarkably cheerful. Then rain began to fall through the mist, so that the Deacon had to don an oilskin coat, and still the Deacon was cheerful. As the rain increased the mist disappeared, daylight came, the rain poured in torrents, and the Deacon's joy was complete; for the boat was safe, the rain promised to fall all day, so that hands but the man on deck would be obliged to remain under cover, and Brown's "watch" was twelve hours off.*

The victim had been awake but a few moments before he clearly foresaw his doom. He tried to determine upon a day of exercise upon deck; surely he had hunted ducks many a day, in the East, when the weather was worse than

* On flatboats the day is divided into four watches of six hours each.

it was on the Mississippi on this particular day. Somehow, though, a man's determination is not so powerful when there is to be some hunting done in which he himself is to be the game instead of the sportsman, and when he tries, agains such odds, to excite the determination before breakfast. As he could not stimulate an honourable passion to assist him against the Deacon, he tried to get thoroughly angry at the old man, but in this attempt also he failed, for the Deacon looked neither solemn, nor pugnacious, nor any other way but perfectly cheerful and manly. Then Brown attempted the part of the beaten cur, and sulked successfully for a few moments; but that part of human nature which makes some men superior to the brutes, rescued him from this humour only to drop him into a lower one, for Brown determined to play the part which is the favourite of all highly intelligent sinners—he would sharpen his wits and prostitute them in any way if only he could beat the Deacon. This resolve did not trouble his conscience in the least, for he was probably as ignorant as every one else is of the existence of any great number of people who would not cheerfully prostitute logic to any extent for the sake of gaining an intellectual victory.

The Deacon talked very little during breakfast; his mind seemed to be soaring above the common plane of breakfast-table conversation on the Sam Weller. Soole, who added to his nautical duties the profession of cook, noticed that the Deacon took a cup more than usual of coffee; it would have augured ill, too, for the intellectual prospects of any one but a flatboat pilot, that the Deacon consumed an immense quantity of fried pork and buckwheat cakes. As for Brown, he became so nervous that he could hardly eat at all. A man who is going to fight agains his inherited instincts always realizes that he has had hard fight before him, even when the instincts themselves are bad and their owner's intention good; how faint must be the heart of the man who proposes to war against the better part of his real self? The Deacon went up deck to fortify himself with a silent prayer; the defaulter stayed below and fortified himself with a pipe of tobacco. A few moments later he Deacon descended the cabin ladder just as Brown was knocking the ashes from his pipe; the eyes of the two men met, and then the Deacon learned for the first time that his proposed attack would not be unexpected. The effect was that the Deacon became temporarily demoralized and repulsed, while his antagonist grew elated and careless, allowing his hurriedly organized wits to disperse to their various quarters and their ease.

But the Deacon had often pondered upon and profited by the scriptural injunction, "Be ye wise as serpents." To his mind the wisdom of the serpent consisted of disimulation, so with this faculty he had become remarkably proficient. He postponed his intended movement for an hour or two, chatted upon matters pertaining to the boat and the river, told a few good stories, and finally had the dawker and the remainder of the crew in excellent humour. Then he picked up an old newspaper, apparently by accident, and read various headings in a desultory manner. Finally he read, as if to himself—

"H'm—the Campbellites intend to erect a church edifice at Brackelsville, and to call a pastor.' Well, well! There are more church edifices and pastors in town now than people can make use of."

"That is natural enough," laughed Brown. "Churches and preachers in general aren't what the people want, so much as they want

somebody who will talk to them in their own way in particular."

The Deacon had not expected so prompt a response, but the spirit of Brown's reply was such as to destroy the pleasure which the readiness of the answer might have called forth. The Deacon mused earnestly for a moment, though with as straight a face as if he were simply absorbing additional items of local news from the paper, then he replied :

"There's a good deal of truth in that, and yet people bein' as they be, there's an excuse for it. Even the apostle speaks well of the foolishness of preachin' you know, so it isn't wonderful that folks should prefer to worship God in their own way."

"H'm!" breathed the Deacon to himself, "that's what I should call 'abusin' plaintiff's attorney.' He's weaker than he thinks, but there's no knowin' how he may feel when he finds out his shakiness." Then the Deacon said aloud :

"Tha's true—that's very true. A good many people only get far enough into religion to save their souls, or to think they save 'em. An' when they some day do some hin'ouscious, they're a good deal worse scamps than other men, just because they promised to be better. But they don't know it, poor sinners."

The Deacon's concession had been made for the purpose of disarming his enemy, but it did far more than the old man knew, for Walter Brown had been one of the model young men whose names are always on church-rolls—or were, less than a generation ago. The wound hurt the young man severely, and the only way he could avoid showing his pain was by laughing at it.

"All that is because men come to wonder whether they understand clearly what is right and what is wrong. Right and wrong are merely relative terms."

"Not according to Scripture," interposed the Deacon.

"That's bad for Scripture, then," said Brown. The Deacon groaned inwardly. He knew little of philosophy except from such attacks as his own denominational journal made upon it from time to time. But he now had no doubt that his antagonist was a philosopher. The good old man speedily recovered his courage, however, for was not a philosopher a person who reasoned? Could a teacher of the Word ask for a better listener than a man of the reason? habit? (The Deacon should not be too severely blamed for this blunder, for he had never before met an avowed philosopher of that very common type which makes reason the bondman of rascality.) The Christian religion, as a logical system, was always on the Deacon's tongue, ready for instant use; but never before had he met any one who seemed intellectually so competent to receive it. Indeed, the Deacon could not imagine how Brown, with such a habit of mind, had not long ago been brought under conviction, unless it was that the Lord had reserved him as a special gift for the Deacon: on suspicion that such might be the case, the good old man breathed a fervent thank-offering to heaven, and began to work in earnest.

"I suppose you don't believe in the Bible then?"

"Not as a safe guide for business men," said the defaulter, filling his pipe anew.

"Just what I say," remarked Lugwine, looking longingly at Brown's tobacco-pouch. Brown accepted the hint, while the Deacon cast a withering glance at the Bottomite, and proceeded :

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" Oh, never mind that," said Lugwine, cheerfully. " My gals ain't big enough to git married, nur the boys to go to jail, so I reckon ther hain't no secrets in it. Fire away."

Thus assured, Br wn reat the missive, of which the following is a reinstating copy :

" DEER KANE, i take mi pen in han ur Mriar Trugg duz to say im well an the chil ren tu. Jim mudley shot a painter.* it bit him fast an he did astur, emery Ginnison is in jale fur shut in—"

" Shuttin?" queried Lugwine, " why, a man can't be put in jail for shuttin' anything."

" Shooting is what is meant, I imagine," said Brown, scrutinizing the letter closely.

" That's more like," said Lugwine, " shoot n' is sometimes likely to get a man in jail—if he gets caught. Gosh!—I most forgot—who did he shoot?"

" Shutin' bud Peters," continued Brown.

" Hooray!" exclaimed Lugwine; " shot a deppity sheriff! Mebbe, though," continued Lugwine, suddenly calming him cl, as he noticed a peculiar lo'k on Brown's face, " mebbe you're been a deppity sheriff!"

" Never!" exclaimed Brown, earnestly, and continued:

" Nance Bird is run away weth Sy Green. i wish you wuz home tante the sam place we:h-on out you, i hope god ell bring you bak safe. im a—"

" Got stuck?" asked Lugwine. " Mriar Trugg ain't over-handy at writin', I spose."

" I guess I can make it out," said Brown. " I'm as ever, your loving wife." That's all."

" Much obliged," said Lugwine, taking the letter, looking it over with some curiosity, and then folding it awkwardly and putting it into a box in which he generally kept fish-bait. " Mebbe I can do you the same. maberly turn some day when your eyes breaks down."

Brown turned away, and walked forward. The last words he had really read in Mrs. Lugwine's letter were :

" ——— im prane tu God fur that stranger seller fur i no theirs surthin' trublin his mind."

III.

Deacon Packstitt was not of the kind which wearies of well-doing. He had a conscience which was very well preserved, as consciences go, a great deal of sentimental honest regard for humanity, and a most unfashionable sense of man's responsibility for the conduct of his brother man. As he had lived nearly three-score years, he had learned by experience, as well as from the Bible, that the human heart is deceitful above all things; and though he was generous enough to first deal with a fellow-being as if the said fellow-being was as honest as he himself tried to be, he was seldom asleep when the trusted fellow-being showed himself to be the creature of sentiments different, very different, from the De-con's own. When he made an assault upon the sinful soul of any acquaintance, he first did it in the most direct and honourable manner, no matter how he had obtain'd the position from which he moved his columns; when, however, the qualities which the Deacon, generally with cause, massed under the collective title of " natural depravity," were displayed by his antagonist, the Deacon dropped the tactics of a general and adopted those of a foxhole, and he would thereafter patiently follow a sly siner through any l-byarin' h and over every obstacle u til he had either captured him or run him to earth.

It follows, therefore, that the Deacon's first

But Jesus wasn't a business man," suggested Brown.

The Deacon winced, but continued:

" He was better; he taught something that included everything else—business and all."

" But his followers don't reach him when he talks of business."

" Abusing plaintiff's attorney again," said the Deacon to himself. " That's jus where he was before, but ble—me! where am I? I don't get along any faster than *he* does." The Deacon made a mighty effort to say something that would put him upon the track he wished to follow, and at la the said:

" Don't you believe in Jesus?"

The defaulter wanted to answer boldly, but he did not find lying so easy an operation in a discussion as it was in business, so he hid his face with a cloud of smoke before he answered:

" No."

The Deacon would have suspected the young man of untruthfulness had he not suspected him of being a philosopher. At length he said:

" Do you believe in anything in place of him?"

" Yes—myself," answered Brown.

" Well, drawled the Deacon, concealing his horror with great success, " it's first rate to believe in somebody that you're wel' acquainted with, and that you know is all right."

A telling shot hurts not less when it is fired at random, than when it is the result of deliberate aim. Brown gared at the Deacon with eyes like those of a wild beast about to spring, and the fact that the old man was still leisurely looking up and down the columns of the newspaper was more enraging than if he had seemed to have made his remark maliciously, and with full knowledge of the facts. The silence was becoming extremely unpleasant to Brown, who could devise no appropriate retort; and when it was finally broken, the defaulter would have preferred it intact again, for it was old Lugwine who spoke, and he uttered only the words, " that's so."

The Deacon finally spoke again, and unfolded modestly, sincerely, and ably, the o-thodox idea of Christ and his work. He did it without interruption, for Brown's temper, in subsiding, left its owner perfectly listless, though once or twice the habit of the scholar made him wish he might be other than he was, that he mi ht improve in certain points the Deacon's statement of do-trines which he himself had many a time enunciated more clearly than the Deacon was doing. The old man closed his exordium with prayer (silent) and went upon deck, from which position he shouted tha the boat was nearing Memphis, and he should lay her ashore long enough to go to the post-office. Lugwine volunteered to accompany him, and when the couple returned to the boat, Lugwine's movements were so full of mystery that Soole and Tanker cautiously snuffed the air to ascertain, if possible, whether their messmates had been drinking. Finally, the Bottomite edged gently toward Brown and whispered :

" Youkin read writin', can't you?"

" I think I can," replied Brown, after true de liberation.

" Well, I used-to could do it, too," said Lugwine, but my eyes ain't as good as they wuz. An' here's my wife gone an' sent me a letter—I dunno who she got to write it, but she said she wuz goin' to send me one to Memphis. Would you mind readin' it to me? I might get the Deacon to do it, I sposse; but then—well, he ain't exactly my kin."

Brown meekly swallowed the compliment implied by Lugwine's closing sentence, but stated that he felt delicate about hearing family details of which he had no right to know.

* Panther.

religious talk with Brown was not his last. Discovering that his stranger-hand was not fond of religion as a set subject of conversation, the Deacon frequently let drop single remarks which were designed to provoke retorts from the young man. Sometimes they succeeded, with the result of giving the Deacon mental advantage which he was not slow to enforce; then, however, the Deacon had tact enough to withdraw before he had frightened his antagonist into sullenness. He calculated, quite shrewdly, that a young man of so evident ability would become restive under successive defeats over which the victor did not appear to be over-exultant; that he would some day, under the cumulative effect of many defeats, grow unduly excited, and display his whole force, with its weakness as well as its strength, and would thereafter be completely at his mercy.

But while there are no heights of personal experience which may not be reached by an honest nature, no matter how imperfect its training or how secluded its life, there are depths which cannot be sounded, even awkwardly, by any one who has not been familiar with the larger and the most varied circles of human effort. Any child, looking upward, may behold the glories of worlds which are millions of miles away, but when it turns its eye downward the shallow puddle at its feet seems fathomless; indeed, it had better remain so, unless to those who have lost something in its depths, for no good naturally inhabits it, no matter how patiently curious hands may search it. In and around Brackelsville there were sinners of many kinds, but all of them, except a few bungling hypocrites, were what might be called simple cases. The Deacon had a mental catalogue of them: he could name in plain terms the particular physical temptation under which the offender fell to whatever sinful plain he might now be upon, and no one of these men would deny the accuracy of the Deacon's definition. But the rascal developed within the boundaries of good society is of a nature altogether different from these. His physical nature may be as frequent an offender as that of his fellow-man in simpler, ruder circles, but his finer mental organization and training, with its opportunities for wrong-doing a thousand times increased, enables him to accomplish mental and moral abasements compared with which the simple violations of the ten commandments seem respectable. The prospective goal of the thief, the brawler, and the murderer, if they care to look for it, is the prisoners' bar; but that of the scamp whose course is pursued through social and business circles, is utterly impossible to contemplate in advance, for it is as likely to be social or financial eminence as the reverse. When, however, the least desirable of these two ends is reached, particularly by a man of considerable shrewdness, he is not, as many a vulgar sinner is, a stranded barque, which needs only a friendly tug to be afloat again, or which may even rescue itself at high tide, but he is an utter wreck, its fragments in a confused jumble, from which no human man can reconstruct it. Worse still, such fragments as seem to possess volition object strongly to reconstruction according to any seaworthy model, or any other except one embodying all the faults of the late original at the moment of foundering.

The Deacon finding himself unsuccessful in his main issue with Brown, turned his batteries upon old Lugwine, and speedily discovered that some people could be shot through and through without being hurt a particle. The old Bottomite was not without reasoning powers—no man is, after he has once desired to transgress any law of state or society—and he

occasionally became wrought up to a pitch of argumentation which astonished all of the crew who had known him principally as a listless, lazy lounger, in justice to his messmates. It must be admitted that that old man was rather a wonder to himself in this respect, for he had never before realized how the fighting spirit, which at home asserted itself in his blood at least once a fortnight, can be gratified as completely and viciously through the tongue as through fist and knife. He occasionally put some of the Deacon's choicest doctrines in great jeopardy by his questions and replies, so that the good man seriously believed that Satan was alarmed for the safety of his own, and was speaking through him. But when the Deacon assaulted morality instead of doctrine, the Bottomite was completely riddled without being conscious that anything unusual, least of all anything dangerous, was going on. One day the two had been sparring vigorously over some of the Deacon's cherished doctrines, and at length the Deacon said, "Lugwine, it makes no difference whether you understand certain doctrines as I do; you know that you ought to live a better life."

"Well," said the Bottomite, modifying the intensity of his reflections by some vigorous sucks upon his pipe, "I don't see but I'm as good as my neighbours."

"But you should be better than they," urged the Deacon.

The Bottomite laughed sarcastically—it was a hollow derisive laugh, that affected the Deacon about as the earlier symptoms of a chill might have done—as he replied,

"If you preached that way to your neighbours, they'd run you out of town."

"My neighbours and yours are different people," replied the Deacon with some acerbity.

"Yes," replied the Bottomite, "they wear better clothes an' go to church more—I s'pose that's what you mean. They're sharper at a bargain, though. Any of 'em that keep store 'll do his best to get a coon-skin from me for less money than he knows his next-door neighbour 'll pay!"

"But they don't get drunk and fight," said the Deacon.

"No-o-o," drawled Lugwine, "but when they hav-a fallin'-out with somebody they go to law with him. Now I think a 'fair stand-up fist-fight is a square way of settlin' a difficulty—there ain't no sneakin' around, no hittin' a feller in the dark about it."

"See here, Lugwine," said the Deacon, "you know you Bottomites bring counterfeit money into town sometimes. I don't say you do it, but everybody knows that it comes from somebody in the Bottom. Now, you know that nobody in town does that sort of thing."

"Well," said the old pagan, after a moment of reflection; "the only difference is that the town way of shovin' bad payer is accordin' to law, 'an' the other way 'aint.' There was Amzi Roper, that bought produce last year. I sold him my corn—twas not much, to be sure, but 'twas my whole crop—an' he gave me a two month due bill for it. He didn't pay it—he ain't paid it yet. What'll ye gimme for it? I can't git nothin', out of him, an' I can't put him in jail, neither."

The Deacon was not buying uncommercial paper; he explained, however, to the benighted Bottomite, that there was a legal difference between spurious bank-notes and genuine notes of hand.

"Of course there is," assented the Bottomite, with his dreadful laugh, "'an' that's the devil of it. Everybody knows about counterfeits, if they've got a bank note detector and can read, but

nobody knows about bad due bills except the fellow that makes 'em."

"There are bad men everywhere," admitted the Deacon, "but that is no reason why other men should be bad, and it's no reason why so much horse-stealing should be managed by Bottom men."

Mr. Lugwine winced a little, noting which the Deacon determined to warn the local "farmer's band" to watch the old man closely.

"Well," said the representative of the suspected district, "I don't know whether it's any worse to steal a hoss outright than it is to cheat a man out of his critter, an' that's the way I lost all the hosses I ever had—lost 'em right in town, too, in open dayight. What do you think of that, neighbour?" continued Lugwine, suddenly addressing Brown.

"You are perfectly right," assented Brown, who had taken sincere delight from the old sinner's defence of his class. When one cannot raise himself to a desired level, it is extremely comforting to bring the level down to his own feet—and it is so much the easier plan of the two. Paganism began to appear even more desirable than ever to the deaularer, now that no had seen it defended, with tolerable success, on the ground of its comparative morality. How, he asked himself, and in a spirit which he imagined was honest, did he differ from the officers of the bank whose funds he had used? People deposited money in the bank because they wanted it in safer hands than their own, but those of them who were business men knew that the bank's counters seldom contained their money. Most of it was loaned almost as soon as received, to whomsoever the bank saw fit to lend it; he himself had made loans for the bank, when he thought well of the prospects of getting it back; he had loaned to himself in like manner. Of course, he believed the chance of repayment was good; would he have been so idiotic as to have knowingly run any serious risk of non-payment?

It was quite easy to reason in this strain as he lunged about the deck in the mellow sunlight of a cloudless day, while the boat drifted safely along in mid-river, but it was somehow impossible, when the thread of his argument had been broken by a call to some minor duty, to resume it when he went upon deck to hold the helm through six hours of a moonless night. Then there came first and remained uppermost the thought that the bank had not received its money back again, that he had nothing to offer as an equivalent, that transactions like his had always been classed among crimes, and that no criminal lawyer would be foolish enough to argue before judge and jury as Brown had argued before himself. And excusable—nay, desirable—as paganism had seemed by daylight, when night came he again and again found himself engaged in a course of self-examination according to Calvin. Had his sin been known only to himself, he might have imagined himself following Calvin still farther, and lulled his fears to rest by trusting in the mercies of the Judge in whose existence and goodness he intellectually believed. Unfortunately, however, for his peace of mind, as the successful wrong-doer seldom does, he was not so much concerned about the manner in which he was regarded in heaven as about the opinion of the world. He believed in God, as we are assured the devils do, but all of us believe in a great deal with which we do not particularly concern ourselves. The mercy of God might save him from the final doom of the wicked, which was the point of orthodoxy upon which his mind was most active, but could it replace him in the society

from which, by his own act, he had excluded himself? If it could not, how much was religion really worth to a man who was in difficulties?

And his imagination was as changeable as his reason. In the warm air of day, his vision bounded only by trees, sky, and water, the every surrounding of the little boat being natural and instinct with life, his intellectual teachings after paganism were supplemented by the imagination natural to most young men of liberal education and warm red blood. He recalled all the desirable deities from his remembrance of classical dictionary he evolved from his fancy an assortment of naiads, dryads, and fauns, that would have made life extremely lively for the habitually lonesome "Father of Waters." He went farther, and endowed with individuality every tree that grew upon the bank, every stream that emptied itself into the great river; he even found it easy to create a sentimental sympathy for an uprooted tree which floated along in the current. But when darkness came to hide most shapes, and distort the remainder, he remembered that not all the deities of Greece and Rome were desirable, that there were demons as well as gods, and satyrs as well as fauns. The grand old river which seemed by day to murmur caressingly to the boat entrusted to it, talked in a very different tone at night; its eulogies, when in the sunlight merely danced and rippled as the boat parted them, now remonstrated sharply and threatened hoarsely; the great sycamores which stood so gray and grand by day light, now seemed to stretch threatening arms through the dark, while the floating log was a shape all the more dreadful because it was nameless. Even night birds and animals opened their mouths only to scream, or shriek, or roar, and the verdure-covered banks of the day became the great black walls which hemmed him in among the horrors he had created, and which ended only where the black horizon dropped to meet them. One night a row-boat crossed the river just astern of the Sam Weiler; a torch showed the occupants to be negroes, black, ragged, dirty, runaway slaves, probably, yet he would gladly have exchanged appearance and fortune with any of them, and accepted whatever fate his new condition might bring him. For what could their future contain that was as bad as the best that seemed in store for him? The life for which they longed they knew of only through imagination; they probably would be disappointed by it when they gained it, if gain it they did. Suppose they were pursued, hunted and torn by dogs, recaptured and taken back to their old life, they would at least be taken to the best they had ever known, and the crime for which they would be punished would always seem a virtue to them. But he, what hunting, what cruelty would he not endure to be restored to the old life from which he had fled, if only he might think of his flight as the fugitive slave would honestly think of his own!

But suppose he could return, without risk of prison, who would there be to welcome him? His father and mother, probably, and the city missionary, whose duty it was to prowl among the dangerous classes. Who would really care for him as he walked the streets? Ugh! The mere thought made him shiver and crouch as he leaned on his heavy oar. Pagan or Christian, penitent or dead, he was sure that he could never again face his old acquaintances, never again inhabit his favourite society, nor any which affiliated with it. Where, then, could he go, to hide from those he had injured, and to find any one who in the least cared for him? His father and mother would travel anywhere, everywhere, to be with him in his trouble. But

offenders frequently learn, without particularly great surprise, how unattractive natural affection may become to those who seek their worldly treasures among more material things. But, make the best he could of a pearances, he could not discover how he could ever be more than an outcast to his own, outcast—he, Walter Brown, young, handsome, educated, refined, an able man of business, and but lately a pet of society! where *could* he go without humiliation? He might return to Brackensville with the remainder of the crew, disguise himself by some new arrangement of hair and whisker, so that no traveller from New York could recognize him! Then he might start anew in life. The town would doubtless grow; there would be some sort of society to enjoy, and but stop—she was known even there; that insignificant, homely, vulgar old woman who had witnessed the departure of the Sam Weller had detected him—she knew there was something on his mind, and she was praying for him! caught!

As he mused in the dark, he unconsciously dropped the mask which he habitually wore by dayight, and he was so absorbed in his unconfordable thoughts that he did not think to reassume his habitual features when the day broke. He neither thought nor cared that his watch was ending and that it was time to call his successor, so when Tanker, whose turn it was for duty, awoke by mere force of habit and came unexpectedly upon deck, the face which he beheld was so strange and unfamiliar that the still sleepy Tanker dropped hastily down the ladder, aroused his messmates, and suggested that the boat must have been boarded and taken in possession at night by river pirates, as had been the fate of occasional other boats of which he had heard. Then the whole crew tumbled up, each with an axe, a knife, or a hatchet, and were not very prompt at perceiving Tanker's blunder, so pale, thin, weird and unlike himself was the face of their helmsman.

"Had a chanc'?" queried the Deacon, laying down his axe and walking slowly aft. "No," replied Brown, his pale cheek flushing as he partly recovered from the fright into which the menacing array of his messmates had thrown him, "but I don't feel as well as I would like to."

"These confounded southern fogs are pretty sure to knock up a man that isn't used to em," said Soole, "but quinine'll make him all right. I'll bring you up some," and the stupid fellow instantly forgot, in the presence of apparent misfortune, that he had been hating Brown quite industriously ever since the boat started on her trip.

"Quinine won't do you no good," whispered Tanker, as he took the helm; "resurrection pills are the thing: I'll bring you up my box of em, an' you can take an' you please. An' I reckon my bed is softer than yours—just turn into it when you go below."

"What you need," observed Lugwine, as he accompanied Brown to the ladder, "is two or three stout horns of whiskey, and first time we lay up at a town you'd better get a lot. A single bottle ain't no good. The Deacon is always down on whiskey; he won't have it aboard a boat of his if he knows it, ou, you can keep it hid—I'll help you do it."

After a bountiful breakfast and a few hours of sound slumber, however, Brown appeared upon deck as bright-eyed as ever, though the genuine sympathy of his messmates made it hard for him to retain his usual self-sufficiency. The calm that usually succeeds a storm even caused him to unbend more amably than he had hitherto done, and he volunteered assistance in the various fragmentary conversations that

occurred, until Tanker and Soole admitted to each other that he was a pretty good fellow after all, though not an easy one to get acquainted with.

The Deacon noted the change in the young man's demeanour. He recalled times when short fits of sickness had somehow changed his own mental constitution for the better, so that he had found occasion to thank God even for sickness. Perhaps the temporary illness of the stranger hand might have disposed his heart more favourably toward the ideas which he had scouted while in perfect health. How far could mere philosophy go towards sustaining a man so filled with fear and dread as Brown had seemed to be that morning? The Deacon determined to ascertain, if possible; but while discussing with himself the ways and means of doing so successfully, he and the unoccupied portion of the crew were startled by a shout from Soole, who was at the helm.

"There's a nigger in the water," said he, "an' he seems to be makin' for us. He's headin' just where we ort to meet him."

Everybody hurried to the side to look; there certainly was a black head moving in the water and toward the middle of the stream. It seemed to move about as slowly as the boat, and the two could not meet for at least a quarter of an hour. The Deacon and his men moved slowly forward, keeping their eyes fixed on the dark spot in the water. It was old Lugwine who finally broke the silence, and with the words: —

"Hang a nigger; that's what I say."

"Niggers have souls, the same as white men," said the Deacon reprovingly.

"I reckon his light out of his body fore we reach him," drawled Soole, "unless he's a mighty good swimmer."

"Mebbe there's a reward to be got for him," suggested Tanker; "he's good for that much, any way."

"No matter what he is," said the Deacon, starting, "he ought to be saved from drowning. Get the skin' over the side, quick; who'll go with me?"

"I will," said Brown, quickly, snatching the oars out of the little boat, and throwing her over the side. The Deacon dropped into the boat, Brown handed the oars down and then descended himself; a few seconds later, and the skin, urged along by the Deacon's stout arms and a swift current, was flying down the stream. Brown instructed the Deacon briefly but frequently as to the course; suddenly, however, he exclaimed,

"Deacon, that's not a darkey—it's a bear!"

"Gracious!" exclaimed the old man, resting on his oars for a moment and gazing over his shoulder; "so it is!" In an instant he turned the skin on its centre and started back for the boat, jerking out as he did so,

"I wish I'd—riid the glass on—him before I lowered the boat. I've seen bears—swimming before, though what they're such tools for—as to swim the Mississippi—an' fool soft-hearted folks—beats me."

"Don't run away from him," pleaded Brown. "Let's have him; I'll manage him with this hatchet, if you'll manage the boat."

The Deacon stuck manfully to his stroke, and gasped—

"I don't care much for bear's meat—I prefer pork."

"Let's have his skin, then," said Brown. "A man don't get a chance at big game every day."

"I like my own skin best," remarked the Deacon, "an' I like it without—scratches."

"He won't care to scratch," urged Brown; "he can't use but one paw at a time while he's in the water, and I can easily disable that with the hatchet."

The Deacon paused no longer than absolutely necessary between his strokes, as he replied,

"I'll take your word for it, but—I don't want to run—no risks. I don't care to—say up now the river—an' pay doctor's bills for—one or both of us. It don't feel nice—to be sewed up in spots—an' bears ain't particular 'bout tearin' on straight edges."

Brown was almost frantic with his desire to engage with Bruin. Being human, he could be a savage hunter at any time, on very short notice; now, his anger having long been stimulated without a chance to vent itself upon anything or any one, the prospect of a perfectly legal fight with some one strong enough to be worth overcoming, he was so nearly beside himself in his eagerness as to forget his manners and exclaim :

"I believe you're really afraid for your life. I'm willing to risk mine, and I'm not prepared, as you believe you are."

The Deacon rested his oars for a moment, and reflected. Fighting a fierce useless animal in the middle of the Mississippi river was poor business for a Deacon, the father of a family, and the pilot and supercargo of a valuable flat-boat, but if by so doing he could in any way show that the courage of the Christian was superior to that of the sinful man, the air would wear a very different aspect. Did not Paul, for the glory of God, fight with wild beasts at Ephesus—probably without the aid of a hatchet, and certainly without a big river to partially disarm the animals for him?

"Get your bear if you want him so bad!" shouted the Deacon, as he again turned the skiff's head down stream, and rowed with all his might.

Bruin saw the couple approaching, and changed his course a mewhat so as to meet them. It was impossible to discern his intentions from his physiognomy, but it was quite evident from his motions that something in or about the boat was extremely attractive to him.

"Pull around him!" exclaimed Brown, as the animal was nearly reached, "so he won't move too rapidly for me to strike squarely. Pass under his nose, as nearly as possible, as you go upstream, and swing the stern square against him if you can."

Brown still kept his seat in the stern, his hatchet hidden from view; he seemed so cool so fearless, in spite of his animation, that the Deacon could not help admiring him and wondering at him. Was the fellow a fool? no; he had dropped some remarks about hunting which showed him to have been a zealous sportsman. But had he ever met a bear before? or hadn't he anything to live for? even if he had not, the instinct of self-preservation must certainly be strong in so healthy a young fellow.

He looked like anything but a man careless of life, as he sat, crouching but alert, with his hatchet reured, but held with a grip so firm that the bone, tendon and vein in the back of his hand stood plainly in view. There could be no doubt that the fellow really had courage of a very fine quality, but where could it have come from? From mere philosophy? Then how much greater than he had ever imagined must be the possibilities of that better courage of which the Deacon knew.

Comparisons of the real with the true, the known with the unknown, may often be safely and profitably made, but not by a person who is an important party to a bear hunt. While the Deacon occupied himself busily with

Brown's face and eyes, he neglected the actual position of the bear, and so it happened, that as he supposed himself about to round Bruin, one of his ears was snatched violently out of his hand, and at almost the same instant the skiff made a sudden lurch in the direction of the departed ear; and when the Deacon, just saving the equilibrium of the boat by a tremendous start in the opposite direction, looked across his shoulder to see what the cause could have been his eyes met eyes which, in spite of an air of meek enquiry, were rather more hoggish than the old man was in the habit of encountering, even among business men. Then he saw, within an inch of his own elbow, an immense blackish-brown paw.

"Here's your bear," shouted the Deacon, scrambling hastily forward, and doing his best to preserve the equilibrium of the boat. "Why don't you come and get him?"

Brown also crept forward, and, bracing himself against the side and seat of the boat, raised his hatchet and aimed a blow at the animal's head. But Bruin, clumsy though he was, was a specialist in the art of self-defence. He skillfully warded off the blow by a stroke of one paw; the hatchet dropped—fortunately into the boat—and the bear himself entered the boat a second later, squatted upon his broad hams, and proceeded to consider the situation.

The Deacon, who with a very strong grasp had retained the remaining oar, raised it, made a tremendous lunge with it after the manner of a lance, gave the bear a severe punch in the back of the neck, and shouted—

"Git out!"

Bruin whirled about as if he had been a dancing master, and the old man, hastily commanding himself to his Maker, went over the side with great rapidity; his motion caused the boat to capsize, and in an instant there was in the river as confused a jumble of boats, bears, deacon and defaulters, as any wisher after "Chaos come again" could desire. The boat turned bottom upwards, and the Deacon spluttered violently about until he rested his elbow upon the stern-post; Brown placed a hand upon the stern, while Bruin, perhaps in answer to the Deacon's fervent prayer that he might, if hungry, devote himself to that one of the couple who was manifestly youngest and most toothsome, placed both paws upon the bottom amidships, and scrambled towards Brown. The defaulter raised his hatchet, and smote the animal on the top of his head, a proceeding which somewhat discouraged the brute. He repeated the blow, and bestowed his thud upon the animal's ankle. The bear suddenly recognized the inevitable, loosened his hold, and drifted down the river, being saluted by a wild shriek as his coat rubbed that of the old man, and his unharmed paw fingered convulsively about the Deacon's breast. Then Brown righting the boat got into it, baled the water with his hat, and instructed the Deacon how to get in without causing another capsize. Knocking the seat loose with his hatchet, Brown used it as a paddle, and worked the boat first to one oar, and then to the other; then the couple overtook Bruin as he drifted insensibly along, gave him two or three finishing strokes, and towed him slowly out to the flatboat, which by this time was about abreast of them.

The old man had but little to say until the animal was hauled aboard, and he himself had changed his clothing. Then he drew Brown

* The Deacon had fallen into the common error of supposing that bears are particularly fond of human flesh, the fact being that they prefer nearly any other article of diet,

aside from where he had been watching the playing of the animal, and inquired—
“Where did you get that kind of grit from? It is too good not to be used in the service of your Maker.”

IV.

“Five mile current, I should say,” remarked Deacon Packstitt, as he walked the deck of the Sam Weller, and moodily observed the surface of the river. “About a hundred and twenty miles a day, that means providin’ we have no bad weather, so’s we have to lay up. So we’ll be in Orleans in four days, unless the current slackens—which there ain’t no danger of its doin’. Only four days to the end of the trip, an’ nobody converted yet. Have I done my best, or haven’t I? I’ve certainly been persistent, in season an’ out of season, an’ what’s come of it all? Nothin’, unless the Lord sees somethin’ that I don’t. Brown ain’t ne’er nearer the kingdom than he was when we started—I hope he ain’t further from it! An’ as for Lugwine, well, Heav’n forgive me, I’m about ready to believe some folks ain’t got no souls any way. I would take an awful load off of my shoulders—my soul, I mean—if I could really believe that there are folks without souls, an’, consequently, folks that ain’t worth savin.’” Praps Brown could prove it to me, with that smooth tongue of his, that will talk a feller down just when he knows he ought to be uppermost. But before I ask him about it, I’d go through my Bible, with the Concordance to help me, and see what that says on the subject.”

The Deacon raised his head, merely to rest it, and happening to notice that Vicksburg, which town he was just passing, made a very pretty picture when the light came from an evening sun, he allowed his perceptive to relieve his reflective powers for a little while. Fine views were not peculiar to the Deacon’s own country, nor even to the Mississippi river as a general thing, so the old man gazed until the light faded and left the hill and its houses to their own natural ugliness. And the scene suggested to the old man a spiritual parallel.

“That was just like Brown, lookin’ at himself, I verily believe,” said he. “He’s got splendid health, an’ that’s the light that glorifies everything in himself that he’s so well satisfied with. I never saw my own depravity till I left Long Island, came West, an’ nearly died on the aze. But it does seem as if the devil helped his own. Ev’ry other New Eastern man that ever came down this river with me has had a tough time with the chills before he got this far. Why we couldn’t have two or three hot rogs before we reach Orleans; they’d fetch him, and they’d make us lay up, too, an’ give me more time at him. I honestly do believe that chills ‘an’ fever has done more to Christianize the West than everything else put together—except the Spirit of God.”

The Deacon paused for a few moments to reflect on this topic, and to peel, with his knife, some very thin shavings from one of the sweeps upon which he leaned. But realizing that he was losing sight of the main subject, he rallied himself after considerable effort, and continued, still with himself for sole auditor—

“Well, you can’t make a horse drink, no matter how often you lead him to the watering-trough—an’ I never could see that it did any good to push his nose down under the water—it only frightened him and made him splutter, an’ always after that want to drink at any place but that I mustn’t get him in *that* fix, else who knows but some universalist would get hold of him—then he’d be damned in spite of

anything. He likes old Lugwine, now, a good deal better than he does me, an’ I never saw anybody before that want’d to be around *that* old cuss all the time, unless it was a deputy sheriff. I wouldn’t feel so bad if he took to Soole an’ Tanker; they ain’t much, to be sure, but they’ve experienced a change, unless Methodist doctrine is all a mistake, an’ I daren’t say that just yet.”

In justice to the Deacon’s observing faculties, it must be admitted that Brown had been influenced as little by the old man’s arguments as the Leac’ n himself feared. Occasional fits of remorse he could not escape, for with a mental nature which, though warped, had never been rendered inactive by bad physical habits, he had also all his time at the disposal of his thoughts, no matter in what direction his mind might insist upon working. But a man who successfully withstands an attack of any sort, no matter how bad his own cause or how good that of his antagonist may be, acquires new power and skill as a combatant, and it follows that the defaulter, who generally strove against his conscience until it retired, and on all other occasions refused to retire himself, began to experience longer periods of ease, and assaults which grew feebler with each recurrence.

Besides, he was approaching a city which, small thanks to what is called interesting news, had impressed itself upon his mind as the most irreligious city in the Union. News-letters which he had seen from there seldom contained any word about churches and benevolent societies, but much about horse-races and duels. And yet, did not his own bank handle a great deal of commercial paper from New Orleans—did it not rate, proportionately with its quantity, as good as the paper of any other mercantile centre? And if the people of this supposedly heathen city were as honest as those of—But, soft—that line of argument was unintentional; if they were as honest as other people, how could his own system of paganism affiliate with theirs? In point of physical morality they are as low as any one could desire, but for sensuality or brutality he had no longings. There was one point of contact ready made for him, however, with beings of an intellectual order, for he knew by a New Orleans journal which he had purchased at a landing above that the theatres were open on Sunday, and that the dramatic tastes of the people seemed to be of a high order.

He drew the paper from his pocket, and re-read again and yet again an ably-written review of a late performance by a prominent “star”; then he fell to musing upon plays he had heard and read, when he heard lumbering uncertain steps approaching, and then he heard the voice of old Lugwine, remarking—

“That an Orleans paper you’ve got?”

“Yes,” replied Brown, in a tone many degrees removed from the amiable,

“They’re buly papers; leastways, them that I’ve seen is,” said Lugwine. “Most always there’s sumthin’ in ‘em about a tip-top fight somewhere. Papers up our way ain’t wuth house room. Even if there is a fight all they ever do is to say there was one, and that the feller that licked is either in jail or the sheriff’s after him. Why, a preacher left five or six around our settlement once, an’ Neini Flicker looked ‘em all through, an’ all ther wuz in em fit to read was ‘bout how a feller that they call ed a visionary, or somethin’ like—”

“Missionary!” suggested Brown.

“Yes,” said Lugwine, after a moment of deliberation, I guess *twas* missionary—‘bout how he was sliced by some fellers in Afriky that

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didn't want to hear him preach, but he would do it, instid of takin' hints when they heaved rocks at him. "Twasn't much of a story, neither, fur he didn't hit back nary time, an' he jist prayed instid of cussin' 'em. You hain't seen nuthin' of the kind, only livelier, in that Orleans paper. I'spose?"

"None that I remember," said Brown, shudder- dering and smiling almost at the same instant.

"That's too darned bad," said the old man, feelingly, as he leaned dejectedly against a barrel of pork, and thrust his hands into his pokets to avoid the labour of sustaining them in the air. "I don't feel over an' above well to-day, an' somethin' of that kind would pick me up almost as good as whiskey."

The evident sincerity of the old man affected as well as amused Brown to a degree which caused him to search the paper again for material of a sort which he, for himself, never re-ected at sight. Fortunately for Lugwine's spirits, the search was not unfruitful. There had occurred a difficulty, in the Achafalaya region, between two scions of good families, so the affair was reported as re pectfully as if it had been a mere excusable altercation instead of a brutal fight—reported, in fact, as it would have been in almost any northern journal, if the social considerations had been similar.

"I've got it," said Brown, with an uncontrollable shiver, "here it is," he continued, handing the paper to Lugwine.

"Well, now," said the old man, with an odd alternation of hesitation and eagerness, "it's too bad, but my eyes are botherin' me a heap lately; would you mind readin' it to me? I'll do as much for *you* some day."

Brown hastily determined to study his auditor by way of neutralizing the details of the story, and began to read, old Lugwine seating himself close beside him.

"UNFORTUNATE DIFFICULTY.

"We learn from a gentleman owning a large plantation on the Achafalaya river, he particulars of a deplorable affair which transpired several days ago. Two young men of finest family had been spending an evening socially with some friends, when conversation turned upon the cotton crop of the neighbourhood. What was merely a difference of opinion unfortunately assumed the aspect of an issue of veracity, and each gentleman being rather heated with wine, charged the other with untruthfulness. The efforts of the other gentlemen present being powerless to prevent a conflict, a hostile meeting, with knives, was immediately arranged, and carried into effect. Both gentlemen —"

"Knives," interrupted Lugwine, "are just the thing, if a feller means business. There ain't any snappin' of caps about a knife, an' no feller haint got a chance to fire up into the air an' spoil the fun of them that's mebbe come miles to enjoy the fight. Go ahead."

"Why, Lugwine," remonstrated Brown, "that's just the trouble. If men meet with knives, some one is sure to be hurt; if they use pistols or guns there may be a chance of both being satisfied without any harm being done."

"I'd like to know," said Lugwine, with judicial deliberation, which failed to entirely conceal his injured feelings, "if cheatin' the audience out of the show isn't doin' no harm? No sir—ee; knives are the things. I heerd once, from a young feller that once run a school in the East somewhere, but come down to our neighbourhood to hide about somethin'—'twasn't none of my bizness to ask him what it wuz—I heerd from him that once their wuzn't no such thing as shootin', an' all kinds of fights wuz

settled with cold iron. Why, he told me 'bout one fight that thousands of fellers got into—thrasher-money, I think he ——"

"Thrasmene I" suggested Brown.

"I reckon that *wuz* it," said Lugwine. "I see *you* know about it too. *Wuzn't* that a fight though? The fellers got so hot slashin' each other that an earthquake came along an' they didn't know a dog-goned thing about it. A feller kinder takes more interest in a row when his man's near enough to grip, you know."

"And it makes him hate his enemy a great deal more, too," said Brown.

"Of course it does," rep'ied Lugwine. "an' it ort to. What's the good of fightin' if you haint got good hate on? An' then, when you hit a man with a knife, you know where you hit him, if you feel around with the knife a little putti-kilar, but a shot—why, if you don't send him to kingdom come first pop, you don't know whether you hit him at all, an' so there ain't nuttin' to encourage you."

"But, Lugwine," argued Brown "one man deserves just as good a chance as another in a fight, for the sake of his family as well as himself."

"Look-a-here, neighbour," said Lugwine, sprawling on the deck so that he might look up into Brown's fac', "you ain't talkin' fight at all—you're goin' on like a church member! I kinder set considerable store by you; I hope the Deacon ain't been a comin' it over you an' spilin' you?"

As the old man spoke, his gaze became so earnest, so serious, so reproachful, that Brown's eyes turned away from it, and he felt conscious of having done something to be ashamed of. In a moment or two he recovered himself, and then, flu-hsing angrily, he crumpled the paper into a ball and tossed it overboard, rising at the same time and beginning to pace the deck with long strides. So trying to be a heathen had really come to this! He had laid himself open to a suspicion of being religious; he was losing the respect of the brute who had become almost to be his model, an' worse still, he had involuntarily become abashed and ashamed under the suspicious looks and suggestions of this ignorant, degraded old wretch! He had imagined himself as raising himself, by metaphysical effort, above the level of the dumb followers of mere moral tradition. Although he had recognized Lugwine as bei g upon the desired plane—it was only as a sort of camp follower—a bit of inert *debris* which had been thrown to the extreme edge of the desired life by the active force which is as peculiar to paganism as to any other system of life.

Why certain thoughts, sentiments, sayings, sometimes present themselves opportunely yet without call, is beyond explanation, but no one—not even the creature of pure reason—can deny that such coincidence of demand and supply frequently occurs. As Brown strode back and forth there came to his mind, for no cause that he knew of, the expression:

"From him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath."

"Hm! what if that *saying* should really be a wise one, after all, in spite of his own belief that it was spoken merely from human sentiment? What *had* been taken away from him? His paganism? Well, he would admit that he hadn't acquired much of it, so far—he could easily get it back again. Perhaps it was his religion? Well—he smiled sarcastically as he talked to himself—if he had so little of it that it had to be taken away from him, then good riddance to it—it hadn't kept him out of trouble at home, and had been the source of most of his mental unquiet since he had—had come

West. For what had that passage come into his mind, any way? Was there really a devil who went about tormenting men? He of course could not attribute his visitation by this saying to any spirit but one of evil, for was not its effect annoying? Had anything really been taken away from him?

Considerable noise was being created aft, and Brown, looking carelessly up to discover the cause, saw old Lugwine throwing a long fish-line into the water and jerking it speedily in again; he was evidently trying to recover the newspaper. The anxiety depicted on the old man's countenance, and his phenomenal industry, amused the young man considerably and, changed the current of his thoughts. Seeing that no effort of his own could increase the length of his overshot line, the old gentleman gave up his attempt, and bestowed upon the line, the paper, and his own soul, a number of condemnatory expressions. Finally, his temper having been assayed, he sauntered sheepishly up to Brown, and said:

"Say, I didn't mean to make you mad, but I hev seen lots of good fellers made kinder like somebody else, by that old cuss of a Deacon an' fellers like him."

"Never mind," said Brown, "I wasn't exactly mad; I happened to be thinking about something else."

"Well," said the old man, biting industriously at his tobacco-plug, "I wuz afear'd I'd riled you awful. Do you know, you throwed away that paper before you finished the yarn?"

"Did I?" asked Brown, who had no recollection of the story.

"Of course you did," replied the old man, waxing earnest, "you only got to where they agreed to fight with knives; that ain't no story; the fight hadn't even begun, an' there's the paper out in the river all wet; it'll sink pretty soon! there's just one thing to be done: let's dump the skiff into the water, quick, an' go out an' grab the paper before it sinks."

"Hang the paper, and the fight too!" exclaimed Brown. "Here, smoke a pipe of good tobacco; play seven up—*any* thing, rather than finding out how two men cut each other to pieces. Men were made for something better."

"There you go again!" complained Lugwine: "if that don't sound like a preacher, what does it sound like? taint *my* fault if I hear such things when you go an' say 'em."

Brown again began to feel ashamed, and to hide his sensation from his interlocutor he hurried forward again. "From him that hath not shall be taken away, even that which he hath!" This saying again obtruded itself upon his mind, and with it came a dim glimpse of what he had really lost by having it not. If he was so sensitive to the suspicions—even the opinions—of a mere bit of human scum like Lugwine was, did it not seem that his self-respect had been taken away? He fought the idea at once, and fought it desperately, but desperation is not the quality with which a man can vanquish a truth—a truth which is fresh, undimmed, uncorrupted, as yet, by any metaphysical attacks from the quarter to which it should trust for its sustenance. The truth conquered, and Walter Brown, gentleman, financier, scholar, man of society, church member, son, brother and lover—a man who had enjoyed the advantages of every human incentive to self-respect—saw himself as the wilful destroyer of a quality more precious than any which his brutish companion had ever carelessly owned: and lost.

The Deacon came on deck just then to look at the weather and river, but he was not so narrow-

of vision as to lose anything else that was within reach of his glaice. He saw his stranger hand leaning listlessly on the pork-barrels, dim-eyed, heavy-faced, a mere sulken cur, in spite of his fine figure and beauty of face. The Deacon was startled, and said to himself,

"Is it the ag' comin' on—glory be to God!—or is it conviction—greater glory be to the same! In either case, I've got the chance I'm lookin' for—the best chance I'm likely to have this side of Orleans. Whether he needs *qui-nine* or prayers, I'll speak to him," and then he advanced and said, aloud,

"Seem to be feelin' down again? Anything I can do for you?"

The defaulter looked at the Deacon from under his eyelids only: he seemed, even to himself, unable to raise his head.

"There's plenty of *qui-nine* below, if you've been took with another chill," continued the Deacon.

The young man shook his head impatiently.

"An' there's balm in Gilead—there's a Physician there," the old man continued. Then, getting no response, he approached closer to Brown, laid a hand on his shoulder, and said,

"Young man, I hate to meddle with other people's business, but if I ain't awfully mistaken, you've got some considerable trouble on your mind. It's *your* affair, an' I don't want to pry into it, as I said, but ther *is* somebody you can't keep it from. Go to *Him*, young man—he's too much of a gentleman to run himself on you."

"I've been there," responded the defaulter, after an unsuccessful attempt to keep silence. "He can't do anything for me."

"That word 'can't' is an insult, even to a man," replied the Deacon; "don't apply it to God. I don't know what you want of him, but—

"I want fifty thousand dollars of him!" said Brown.

The Deacon retired precipitately. Here was a fellow who was mixing business and religion, a mixture which the Deacon, in spite of a pretty fair conscience, knew nothing about. Why would men make such attempts, he wondered? To Soole, who was crawling up the ladder and commenting upon the strange appearance of his stranger messmate, the Deacon explained—

"He's got business troubles on his mind."

Soole slouched up to Brown, tried unsuccessfully to catch his eye, and finally whispered apologetically—

"I'd take coffee back, if I was you. I can't afford half as much as can be got rid of at Brackelsville."

Brown looked up enquiringly, and regained, only to lose them an instant later, his customary spirits, as he divined the probable cause of Soole's advice. "Thank you," said he, and turned away to rid himself of his would-be assistant. Strolling aft, he was hailed by Tunker, who was at the helm, and who said to him—

"Seem to be down in the mouth, pardner. Fellows often air when they're getting near Orleans. Made up your mind what you're goin' to do when you get there—what you're goin' to take back with you, I mean? Just take my word for it, there ain't nothin' like sugar. Low freights, you know, cordin' to what it'll fetch when you git it home, an' no risk of wastin' if you ship it on a good boat."

The young man again changed his base, angrier and more tormented at heart than he had yet been. The feeble means suggested, contrasted with the greatness of his need, even if restoration of the bank's money could restore him again to the life which he had lost and the only life he cared for, showed him with terrible

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distinctness the hopelessness of his position. There was no sense in hoping against the odds which were against him; there was no life but the old life which presented any attractions. There was no one alive who cared for him but to punish him through the means which were provided for the punishment of criminals. Why should he continue to live if no one had any interest in him but from selfish motives? The river was beside him, and all about him; it could keep his secret, if he cast himself into it. But no, there were those tell-tale initials upon his arm; water seemed always reluctant to keep its dead; he would be cast up, he would be found, recognized, and his memory would be branded as that of a coward as well as a defaulter. Well, he could tie the sounding lead and other weights about him, so as to bury himself beyond chance of resurrection. If no one cared for him—"

"Say, neighbour," sounded a familiar voice at his ear, causing him to start violently, "the paper is gone—I saw it sink. I won't say anything more agin' yer 'bout talkin' like a preacher, but I am disappointed worse than thunder. Would yer mind readin' the old woman's letter over agin to me?" That only sez that Emery Ginnison shot the sheriff's d-pitty; there wosn't no knothin' there. It'll be lots an' jobs of comfort for me now, yer can jist beat yer life on it."

Brown mechanically stretched forth his hand for a letter, which Lugwine was slowly extracting from his odourless receptacle. Lugwine awkwardly smoothed its many folds, and Brown took it between the extreme tips of finger and thumb, while the old heathen rubbed his hands in anticipation. Brown read the letter automatically, being absorbed in the fragments of his own thoughts and apprehensions, and consequently he began to read, forgetful of its import, the closing paragraph of the epistle.

"I'm prane for——"

"What in thunder is the old woman a-prayin' about now?" asked Lugwine. "I disremember that when you read it last time; I s'pose I was so took up with the way that Emery Ginnison got even with the deputy-sheriff that I forgot all about what came after. But she's alluz a-prayin' for somebody or somethin', just as straight-ahead as if I'd do some good. Women are darned queer critters, anyhow; did you ever know any of em' that could mind her own biznis, an' wouldn't go around botherin' herself with other folks' affairs? Been around among women much in your time?"

"Some little," answered Brown, looking backward a few years, with sentiments not at all quieting in their influence.

"Well now, there's Almyr," said Lugwine, "rolling a splinter tenderly back and forth under his huge brogan, yer never saw such a woman. Good enough, as women go—best woman alive, in fact. Never cus es after I've been off two or three days with the boys; alluz hez somethin' fur me to eat, whether I fetched it in or not. Yer might leave a jug of four-year-old right under her nose for ten years, an' she'd never steal a drop of it. She's alluz a-do-n' somethin' for the young ones, though what they need tohev done for em' I never can see. An' yit she's alluz got time to pester her mind 'bout somebody else. Nobody else else ever does anything for her. She hears, somehow or other 'bout ev'rybody that gets into scrapes 'round our naberhood, an' over in town too. She don't git paid for it, like preachers do, or I could see through it. She don't keer a cent 'bout how that deputy-sheriff got shot; ef I wuz home, an' tellin' her 'bout it, sh wouldn't listen much—she'd act just ez if she

wuz asleep, an' yit, if the deppity come into the house al chawed up, or Emery Ginnison came in to hide from them that might be after him 'bout the shootin', she'd be as soft-hearted to one on 'em as she would to 'other. Dog on my cats if it don't beat my schoolin'."

And this was the person who alone of all he knew, was caring anything for him, even if the method of her attention was one which he had come to consider as decidedly antiquated! So the defaulter mused. That others might be equally earnest in the same direction, as was more than likely, the young man had not imagined; for the imagination of a debased mind, no matter how active it may be, is more likely to crawl than to soar. Father, mother, and God he knew much about, but—the prodigal son, even, seems never to have thought of his father, rich and powerful, until his lower nature, his stomach compelled him to do so. An ignorant, low-down old woman was the only person alive who was caring for him for reasons other than personal. Her husband liked him, to be sure, but how long would he continue to do so after the gratuitous tobacco-pouch became empty? Sooie and Tanker—pshaw! he had frequently given advice of a similar character himself out of the love of giving advice, and dodged the recipients afterward for fear that they might ask favours of him. The Deacon—well, all these old church pillars thought to save themselves from eternal fires by plucking somebody else from the burning.

Well, at any rate, he had not asked for her sympathy: she had bestowed it unsought; still, she had seen in him the necessity for it. She had seen him for but a few moments, and even in those her mind must have been partially occupied by thoughts of her husband. The defaulter was not conscious of having thought at all of his unpleasant position on the morning of embarkation; could it be that his face, which had successfully locked his guilty secret from the sharp-eyed officers of his bank, had been as crystal under the eyes of this vulgar old woman? Ifso, how and where could he secrete himself from the eyes of the world in general?

As the young man pondered, the river kept on its course, and as Brown went on duty at the helm that night, the Deacon informed him that the boat would reach New Orleans in time for the crew to go to church on Sunday morning, it being already Thursday night.

"I suppose, thou h," remarked the Deacon, "that you don't care much to go to church, 'cein' that you b'leve all principally in yourself. But don't you think there's somethin' kind o' touchin' an' manly in a lot of men and women, lots of 'em smart folks too, gettin' together on Sunday an' humbly expressin' their trust in a Power that they never saw, an' yet b'leve must be managin' the things they don't understand. When I was a young man, even though I was in the gall of bitterness and the bonds of ini-
quity, I used to enjoy goin' with the multitude whether they was dom' evil or good. I was generally evil, an' I didn't hang back from doin' my share, but long before I got into a state of grace I took a good deal of comfort out of bein' with them that served the Lord. It kinder brought me nearer to my own kind, an' made me feel as if I had lots of friends, even in a church where I don't know man, woman, or child. You'd better try it just once—you'll feel all the better for it."

The defaulter hung moodily upon the great rudder-sweep; he was grateful, at least, that the darkness of night hid his face from his superior officer. Suddenly business came into the

Deacon's mind and banished religion for the moment.

"Bout three or four miles done," said he, "there's a new cut-off. It don't mount to muck as a rule, but the river's pretty high just now, and there might be some little coast steamboat be comin' up through it. Keep the boat's head well out in the stream."

The Deacon descended to his bed, and the defaulter to his thoughts.

V.

The Deacon's hope and promise that the Sam Weller would reach New Orleans early enough to enable the crew to go to church was not verified. The boat lost several hours by grounding on the point of an island near Baton Rouge; so the bell rang for morning service an hour before the spires of the Crescent City were sighted. But the Deacon was not going to disregard any portion of the day merely because he happened to be out of reach of church privileges. The current of the river did not cease running on Sunday; so the old man allowed the boat to drift upon it, but otherwise he observed the day with all possible respect. He appeared on deck, as he had done on every Sunday during the trip, clad in the peculiar combination of white linen, black satin, and shiny black cloth in which well-to-do Church members in the West always made themselves uncomfortable and awkward on Sundays. Usually he displayed his Bible also upon deck, but on this particular day he seemed to have some different form of worship on his mind. The whole crew were on deck, ready to work the boat, by means of the great sweeps, to that portion of the levee which the Deacon might select. Soole, reclining forward, was casting up, for the fiftieth time, a column of figures chalked upon the deck, and representing his prospective transaction in coffee. Tanker was observing an occasional sugar-house chimney which shot up against the horizon, and idly guessing from which one his own hogshead of sugar might come; while Lugwine lay upon the deck and tenderly caressed the bundles of large bamboo canes cut a few days before. But the Deacon's heart was upon treasures of a different order. He looked upon his stranger hand, who stood aloof from the others, and seemed to be taking in all of the scenery through his quick bright eyes, and the old man groaned in soul. His own authority over Brown would cease within a very few hours, and then what would become of the fellow? These men, who believed so strongly in themselves, were just the sort to go to horse-races, to go to the theatre on Sundays, to gamble, even to take part in duels, the Deacon thought with a shudder. Yet what could be done to prevent him? Should he make another effort? and if so, what sort of one? He had tried upon Brown every argument that he had ever heard brought to bear upon any sinner. Certainly they were intellectually correct, for the wisest heads in the Church had originally constructed them, and other wise heads had been using them ever since. There was a passage of Scripture that hit Brown exactly, thought the Deacon, with a sensation not far removed from satisfaction. "He that being often reproved, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy." But it was too bad. The Deacon mentally reconstructed the young man's immortal part as he stood there staring at him, and groaned to think how able a prayer-meeting leader and how useful a Sunday-school man the Church was losing by Brown's perseverance in his sinful course. He could easily

imagine him standing up in the basement of the little church at Brackel ville, after some familiar hymn had been sung, and making a prayer which, in the distinctness and fervour which could not help characterizing it, would be a perfect shower of refreshing to those who languished in the spiritual desert which was so feebly watered by the brethren who had the matter in charge—the Deacon would admit that he himself was no more able than the rest.

But the boat drifted along, and the little villages adjoining the Crescent City on the north were sighted, and the Deacon's thoughts drifted on until they grew desperate. He had pleaded steadily with this man without success. Was there anything left to be done but to warn him? And how much attention was he likely to pay to any warning, this man that believed principally in himself? No, the Deacon thought it better to speak to him kindly, and avoid religious topics entirely, trusting to leave behind him, at the last, something to make the young man's memory of him kinder than it was likely to be while it consisted principally of unpalatable exhortations. The Deacon approached Brown, and said—

"You're at liberty to leave whenever you like after the boat reaches shore, for the cargo is sold, and the consignee's watchman will take charge as soon as we get to the levee. You're welcome to make your home aboard as long as you're in the city and the boat ain't pulled to pieces,* though I s'pose naturally you'll look up better accommodations. An' I want to say to you, knowin' it's your just due, an' hopin' it'll give you some satisfaction to know it, that you've been the best flat-boat hand I've ever had in my life."

"Thank you, thank you," responded Brown, cheerily. "I've tried to do my duty, but I'd no idea that I'd succeeded so well. I guess I'll leave the boat, however, when we go ashore, for I may be able to find some people in the city whom I know."

"I s'pose," ventured the Deacon, looking directly into the water as if Brown were swimming alongside, "that we won't see you at Brackelville again?"

"I don't know, really," said Brown; "my plans are not formed as definitely as I should like them to be. I may remain here, but I think I shall return to the East."

"Well," said the Deacon, "come an' see us come to my house if you get West any time. I'll promise not to talk religion to you always, as I know I have done on this trip. I didn't mean to worry you——"

"Oh, don't apologize," laughed Brown. "Business is business, and religion is one of your businesses. You attend to it ably, too—don't imagine that your failure to capture me is due to any lack of ability or effort on your part."

"Why, thank you; that's kindly, any way," said the old man, hoping anxiously that the recording angel had been listening to the conversation and had taken note of it. "But I want to ask one favour of you; if you ever do experience a change, let me know, won't you? 'Twould be an awful comfort to me that so smart a fellow was on the good ship Zion with me."

"You shall know in such case, I promise you," said Brown, with a smile.

The city had now begun to disclose itself; and a very grateful view it was to men who had for weeks floated through the lonely wilderness

* Flat-boats are unable to reascend the river, and are therefore sold as old lumber, and are broken up.

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of the Lower Mississippi. The Sam Weller was slowly worked up to the levee in the upper part of the river, above the almost endless line of smoking steamboats, one of the consignee's clerks came aboard, and the Deacon formally turned the boat over to him. Brown dropped down the ladder, seized his portmanteau, ascended, exclaimed "Good morning, gentlemen," to his more leisurely messmates, and was ashore before any one recovered from their astonishment at his haste.

"Don't seem to want to continner the acquaintance," remarked Soole to Tanker, as their late fellow-traveller moved rapidly across the wide street called "the Levee."

"Well, then, nuther do I," growled Tanker; "though, seem I let him into the way of makin' money on sugar, he might just have shook hands with me."

Lugwine was too much astonished to say anything, but his wits were busily engaged in taking in the change in the situation. The result was that he sprang ashore himself, and chased his retiring messmate with an agility which no one would have believed him capable of. Brown had just struck the pavement, and was regaining the New Yorker's own step, and realizing how long it had been since he had taken it, when a man ran rapidly up to him and clapped him on the shoulders. The defaulter shrunk away from the touch, and dropped his portmanteau from pure fright.

"I didn't mean to scare you," said Lugwine, "but I don't know the ways of the town, an' I haven't got an extra cent nohow, an' you ain't the kind of fellow that smokes pipes ashore. Couldn't you spare me some of your extra smokin' tumbaker?"

Brown recovered his colour and his self-possession, and handed Lugwine his tobacco-pouch.

"There," said he. "Now keep sober on the way back, and be a better husband when you get home. Your wife is too good for you. But wait - come along with me a little way."

The astonished Bottomite followed in silence. What did Brown know about him and his wife? Like enough that sneaking Tanker and meddlesome Soole and infernal old Deacon had been telling lies about him. Why couldn't folks mind their own business? But where was Brown taking him? Could it be - oh, sweet Heaven! - could it be that Brown was going to stand treat? The old wretch's whole nature was alive in an instant at the mere thought of such a thing.

The couple walked on until they reached a street containing small shops, all open, as was customary in New Orleans on Sunday. Brown entered one of these, in which a number of people of various colours were chattering and bargaining; here he purchased a small, cheap, bright coloured shawl, and handed it, wrapped, to Lugwine, saying -

"Please give this to your wife with my compliments. Good-bye."

Brown walked rapidly away, while Lugwine stood at the store door with eyes nearly as large as saucers, and watched the retreating figure. Slowly the Bottomite found his tongue, and then he drawled -

"Well, I'll be darned! I might have known from his cut that he was a ladies' man, but I never would have allowed that Almiry waz just the style that he liked. She is a fine woman, though - I can lick any cuss that says she ain't. I herlicked fellers, when she wuz a gal, just fur sayin' their ga's took the shine off of her. Now I come to remember, she was kinder took by him that mornin' that the boat started. I hope he ain't a goin' to come back an' try to cut me out! Sends her a present by me, too - me - her husband! An' a shawl! Wonder what put it

into his head? I never thought to give her a shawl. Well, I'll be darned!"

The crew of the Sam Weller, Brown excepted, reached Brackelsville in due time, and the Deacon, who arrived a fortnight later than the others, having tarried in New Orleans to look after some little speculations of his own, sought the store of his employer. Uncle Berryman happened to be without customers when the old man entered, and he greeted his pilot heartily.

"Good morning, Deacon," said he. "Glad to see you back. First-rate trip, wasn't it? No leaks, no wrecks, no towin' to be paid for. Ah! the Lord seems to have smiled on that cargo. Do you know, I got half a cent a pound more for my pork than anybody else in this town did."

"I'm glad to hear it," said the Deacon.

"Yes," said Uncle Berryman, gleefully; "got the offer by mail, as I wrote you; while the other fellows, who hauled to the river an' shipped by steamboat, got to market earlier, had heavier freight expenses to stand, and sold cheaper after all. I tell you what 'tis, Deacon: 'The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him.' What'd you pay that stranger fellow when it came to settlin'?"

"Twenty dollars, as we agreed to do," replied the Deacon.

"Sho!" exclaimed the storekeeper, his spirits dropping somewhat. "I hoped you might get him to think it over again, an' git him to take fifteen."

"He earned his money," said the Deacon. "I never knew a better flatboat hand."

"Well," said the storekeeper, with a conservative air, "that's no reason why he should git more than he was willin' to take. Oh! I forgot. How did you get along with him an' the other fellow that you was goin' to convert? I know about how much you did for Lugwine, for the old reprobate went on an' awful treat as soon as he got home, an' was put in jail for fightin'. P'raps you did give him a Presbyterian conversion - there's some kinds of conversion that don't strike in very deep. By the way, there's been a precious outpourin' of the Sperrit in town since you left; mebbe you've heard of it. Lots of sinners have been gathered into the ark of safety, an' there's more a-comin'. It's kinder simmered down now, but there's a prayer meetin' kept up every night - all the churches jine in it. You'd better come around - mebbe you can bring old Lugwine into the fold yet, if you have us Methodists to help you."

The storekeeper's slurs upon denominations other than his own were not sufficient to keep the Deacon away from general religious services, so, promptly a' half-past seven, he walked into the Methodist Church, where the Union meetings were held, and took a seat well forward among the godly. The service did not seem to the Deacon to differ much from the regular weekly prayer meetings of his own Church. The flood of excitement had subsided, the noisy eddies which had whirled sinners about in previous meetings had quieted, and the driftwood, both good and bad, which every flood brings to torment both friend and foe until it is caught and put where it will do the most good, had been left high, dry, and lonesome by the lowering flood. The hymns were much the same as those which were sung in the Deacon's own prayer-meetings; the prayers offered by habitual prayer-meeting men of the different churches, bore a strong family resemblance to each other, and to collections of favourite passages of Scripture, and the audience would have been recognized anywhere as a prayer-meeting audience - a body which was remarkable principally for the absence of those wh-

most needed to be prayed for and those who needed most to pray. Outside the door and windows lounged several men, young and old, who had come as escorts to women, but who cared not to follow their mates within the sanctuary. Among these was old Lugwine, and he leaned against the frame of a window which commanded a view of his wife, and particularly of her new shawl, which he considered the finest article of female attire in the State. The old man occasionally varied his position to relate to the other loungers some reminiscences of the flatboat trip, and the place and occasion reminded him to tell, with great glee, how the Deacon had tried to convert the stranger hand, and how he got harder knocks than he gave. Through the open windows came the sound of both praise and prayer, and both sounded dismal to the loungers.

Finally, after the usual number of prayers and hymns, the leader of the meeting announced that an opportunity would now be given to any one who felt moved to speak. A voice, strange to most of the persons present, but familiar to the Deacon, was heard beginning—

"My friends—" The Deacon hurriedly twisted his neck, and saw, standing in a back seat, his late flatboat hand, Walter Brown. Lugwine espied him at the same instant, and his surprise caused him to ejaculate in a tone loud enough to be heard throughout the room.—

"Well, I'll be darned!"

"My friends," said the strange speaker, "I am unknown to most of you, but I have a word to say to those who profess to serve God and desire to bring others unto Him. I have long been a member of an evangelical church elsewhere; I accepted religion logically, and have urged it upon many another man in the same manner. Then I fell from the position I had occupied, or fancied I occupied, in the Church; I left my home, and believed myself abandoned, for good cause, by my friends. I learned what a hypocrite I had been, and I endeavoured to preserve my pride by sacrificing my belief in the religion in which I had professed to believe, and was succeeding quite well, in spite of the efforts which a very good man in your midst made to lead me back again. After he had employed all argument—the ablest argument—unsuccessfully upon me, I was still abasing myself successfully, and uprooting my faith in what was good, when I accidentally discovered that an old woman who was under no obligations to me—whom I had barely seen, in fact—had out of pure sorrow for the condition of mind in which she had detected me to be, was praying for me. This truth I could not shake off or forget—that some one, and not a being of high order, but one of your own Bottomites, cared enough for me, a stranger, to disquiet her own heart for my sake. I have had Christ preached at me in every conceivable way, my friends, ever since my boyhood, but I really learned to comprehend him for the first time through this low type of hu-

manity, but high form of human unselfishness. I have come all the way back from New Orleans just to look at a being who cared this much for me, and who has made plain to me the nature of a greater Being, whom all other teachers have explained to me in vain. And I beg to impress upon you the truth which this experience has impressed upon me—that unselfish human lives are the best means of teaching to men the nature of God, in whose likeness they are made."

Brown seated himself, and Mrs. Lugwine, of whose presence he was ignorant, wept silently and happily to herself in the extreme corner of a back seat. There was a movement near the door and then the voice of old Lugwine was heard exclaiming,—

"I weaken, if you've got him, there ain't no chance outside for me."

Some of the brethren left their seats and gathered around the old sinner, while Brown pressed close to him, whispered "Ask your wife," and disappeared.

Some days later the directors of the Domestic Bank of New York, having transacted the business for which they had assembled in one of their regular meetings, indulged in considerable desultory grumbling about small depositors, customers who were too urgent for discount, securities which had gone down when the bank held them and gone up when the bank should have held them, when there appeared in their midst their defaulting teller. Every one was too much surprised to speak, though one clear-headed old fellow took the precaution to slip behind the young man, lock the door, and remove the key. There seemed at first to be some doubts, either as to the identity of the intruder or that of the talkers-on, but at length the president remarked sternly—

"Well, sir?"

"Well, sir?" replied the young man, meekly.

"What have you to say for yourself?"

"Nothing."

"Where is our money?"

"Gone."

"Then you shall go to prison."

"I suppose so."

"What did you come back for? Who brought you?"

"Nobody. I came of my own accord. I came to be punished; supposed I deserved to be."

"Much good that will do us, who have to lose the money you stole," growled one director.

"I've nothing but myself, gentlemen," said he defaulter. "I've brought myself here from two thousand miles away, so that you might satisfy yourself with me in any way you could."

"Why, I believe the rascal has got religion," exclaimed the president, after surveying his late employe critically for a minute or two.

"That's it, sir," said the young man.

"Get out then," said that official; "go somewhere where you can be of some use; the bank's too good for you, but jail's too bad."

And he went.

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